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LECTURES ON THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

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LECTURES ON THE INCARNATION OF GOD

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LECTURES ON THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

BY

E. L. STRONG, M.A.

PRIEST OF THE OXFORD MISSION BROTHERHOOD
OF THE EPIPHANY, CALCUTTA

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PREFACE

THIS book contains the substance of lectures which were given to the Oxford Mission Sisterhood of the Epiphany at Barisal, Bengal. They were not intended for publication, and are only published now because the Sisters have urged for a long time that they ought to be, because they believe they will meet a need which many feel. It seemed wrong, in the face of this, to go on refusing to publish them, so I asked for and obtained the consent of my Superior. Another consideration has lately inclined me to think the Sisters may be right—namely, that the latest publications of the new psychologists, especially one of them, make it necessary that more books dealing with the subject of these lectures should be written. And it may be that this one is intended to fill a gap for the help of some people till better books arrive.

The need is caused by the fact that these books usually leave off where the teaching of Christ begins, which would be good if that was what they professed to do, but is liable to cause much harm because they profess to do very much more. It is fair to take Dr. McDougall's book, 'Social Psychology,' as the chief example of the books I refer to, for it is the one which has taken most hold on the public mind, having already reached its sixteenth edition; and to illustrate what I mean from it. In his Introduction he insists that psychologists should henceforth 'boldly assert' the claim of their science 'to be the positive science of the mind in all its aspects and modes of functioning,' or, as he would prefer to say, 'the positive science of conduct or behaviour.'[1] But when we examine the book to find out

[1] P. 15. Cf. the title of his book in the Home University Library, *Psychology, the Study of Behaviour.*

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how much behaviour it professes to explain, it seems that it leaves off just where the highest kind of human behaviour begins: that it stops short, in fact, at the point where Christ's Gospel arrives to teach us what kind of life, of behaviour, man is meant for, and how he can attain to it.

For example, chapter viii. treats of 'The advance to the higher plane of social conduct': by this is meant, as its contents show, the *highest* plane that man can attain to. With regard to this he says 'Even the purely altruistic sentiments, the love of beneficence or of mankind in general, will not necessarily suffice to enable a man to reach the highest plane of conduct—not even if they are strong. The habit of self-criticism is required, and this implies, and arises from, a strong self-regarding sentiment . . . what may be called the master-sentiment among all the moral sentiments, namely, the sentiment for a perfectly or completely moral life. . . . In this sentiment the altruistic and egoistic emotions and sentiments may find some sort of reconciliation; that is to say, they may become synthesized in the larger sentiment of love for an ideal of conduct.' [1]

Again, in chapter ix. on 'Volition,' he defines volition as '*the supporting or re-enforcing of a desire or conation by the co-operation of an impulse excited within the system of the self-regarding sentiment,*' [2] and then proceeds to consider the cause of the highest kind of volition. What is it, he enquires, which may make a man desire to take the hardest line, the line of greatest resistance, when all the ordinary motives for conduct, including the approval of an ideal spectator, are against it? He says it may be because he has decided that courageous self-sacrifice is a principle superior to all other considerations. 'But,' he adds, 'in order that his adopted principle may powerfully affect his conduct, something more is needed. He must have a strong *sentiment for self-control.* Of all the abstract moral sentiments, this is the master-sentiment for volition and especially for resolution. It is a special development of the self-regarding sentiment.' [3] Later on he adds, 'Our study of volition is not complete without some consideration

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 226. [2] *Id.* p. 249. [3] *Id.* p. 253.

of the relation of the will to what is called character.' [1] He then discusses what is meant by a strong character and decides, 'There is only one sentiment which by becoming the master-sentiment can generate strong character in the fullest sense, and that is the self-regarding sentiment . . . when the habitual dominance of this master-sentiment has been established, perhaps after many conflicts, it becomes capable of determining the issue of every conflict so certainly and easily that conflicts can hardly arise; it supplies a determining motive for every possible situation—namely, the desire that I, the self, shall do the right. . . . In this way the self comes to rule supreme over conduct.' He ends his account of a man's volition thus: 'At the intermediate level of the development of the personality, the ends or final causes of his action are immediate, various, and often inharmonious with one another; with the development of a unified personality . . . these are more and more superseded and controlled by a single, all powerful, final cause, the ideal of the self.' [2]

That is the highest account of human behaviour and its motive that this treatise attains to. And since it professes to be an exposition of the science of behaviour in general, it implies—even distinctly teaches—that this is the highest that man can attain to, at any rate in this world. Yet it contains nothing more than a description of what S. Paul calls 'the natural man' (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος) who 'receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God' [3]; or 'the old man' that has to be 'put off,' or 'put away,' that we may 'put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.' [4] Fully developed man, as described by Dr. McDougall, has *self* for his centre to the last—a self which indeed has been wonderfully refined and developed since its first rude beginnings in the animal kingdom, but which still causes his master-sentiment to be nothing higher than a self-regarding one.

But though this master-sentiment may account for much behaviour which seems heroic, even such as is typified by

[1] *Id.* p. 258. [2] *Id.* pp. 261–263. [3] 1 Cor. ii. 14.
[4] Eph. iv. 22 f.; Col. iii. 9 f.; Rom. vi. 6.

that of our old friend Mettus Curtius leaping into the gulf in the Forum, yet this description of man takes no account of the difference that the Incarnation of Christ has made, and is always making, in human nature; moreover, it ignores the vast mass of evidence which comes from those whose conduct has been, as most men in Christendom at any rate acknowledge, the highest and most beautiful that has been produced in man, and who would with one voice confess that they were what they were because Christ had delivered them from the bondage to that same self-regarding sentiment that Dr. McDougall describes, and had put in its place a sentiment incomparably higher—namely, the *love* (*ἀγάπη*) which enables men to forget themselves and to live no longer for self, but for God and for their fellow men for His sake.

The teaching of Christ on this subject is frequently recorded in the Gospels. 'Whosoever shall seek to gain his life [or 'soul'] shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life [i.e. for Christ's sake and the Gospel's] shall save it alive.'[1] The New Testament as a whole shows that this means that those who live for self, whose master-sentiment is a self-regarding one, shall not know what their true life is, and that only those who renounce, say 'no' to, self and live for God, i.e. for love, can know what the true life is for which man was created. Christ promises to give men the power to do this, and so to make them new men—'a new creation,' as S. Paul calls it.[2]

It is the object of this book to show what happens when men allow Christ to do what He wills in and through them: which is, in effect, to begin where Dr. McDougall leaves off, and to show the purpose of that long process of evolution ending in the 'natural man,' which is so ably described in 'Social Psychology.'

I hope I have not given an unfair account of those recent books on Psychology of which Dr. McDougall's is a learned and the most widely read example. Perhaps I should rather say, I hope I have done so. For it would be a great

[1] S. Luke xvii. 33; S. Matt. x. 39, xvi. 25; S. Mark viii. 35, etc.
[2] See 2 Cor. v. 17.

gain to us all if his treatise could be generally seen to be a kind of introduction to the Gospel. So far as it is truly that, it is of great value. But its danger lies in the fact that it appears, as I am sure it must appear to the great majority of the people who read it, as a treatise on human behaviour which teaches that man's life at its best has its centre in himself, and that the highest motive he can attain to even for his apparent altruism is a self-regarding one. Hence it will, it is to be feared, have an effect on many people similar to that which was produced on a vast scale by the publication of Darwin's 'Origin of Species.' That work took the world by storm on account of the prodigious amount of learning that lay behind it. It seemed to state a complete case, and to show that the true law of life was a law of selfishness; that the best that men or nations could do was to live for self. It seemed to justify the selfish and even cruel behaviour of which men had hitherto been ashamed even while they indulged in it, and it has, perhaps rightly, been considered as one of the main causes of the Great War.[1] No one can measure the ill effects that any learned book may have which seems to justify man's innate selfishness, and to suggest that he cannot, or is not meant to, rise above it.

Since Darwin's book was published it has often been pointed out, and is now well known, that it left out of account the most important part of the evidence which should have been considered, which would have shown if it had been considered that the evidence as a whole pointed to a very different conclusion. It will no doubt be the same later on in the case of much of the new psychology, if its teaching is what it now appears to be: but until that happens its dangerous tendencies remain in operation.

If this book is found of any use in that direction; if it enables some to realize more clearly than they did before, how far they can rise above self, how obediently they can respond to the heavenly visions, with their calls for self-

[1] See this set forth at length in Dr. Kidd's brilliant book, *The Science of Power*, especially Part I.

sacrifice, which are coming to man now in such manifold forms, how completely they can through union with Christ become God's instruments for the salvation of the world; it will only be another instance of the way in which God is always producing wonderful results from very poor material.

E. L. S.

BARISAL,
November 1922.

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PART I

The Christian Character, in General

The Christian character is the character of Jesus Christ, that is, of God Himself manifested in and through human nature.

THE character at which all Christians are to aim is manifested in its completeness in the life of Jesus Christ, which is recorded and commented on in the New Testament. Different aspects of it have frequently been manifested with wonderful perfection in the lives of His followers. But the complete character, whose different aspects or virtues all exist together in perfect harmony, has been shown to mankind only in Him.

Though His life in this world was so short, and though so little of what He said and did even in that short time has been recorded,[1] the record is nevertheless sufficient. This does not mean that those who read the record can understand easily all that it teaches. Christ's character is so high above all such moral or spiritual perfection as man apart from Christ can conceive of, that it is not easy for any of us to grasp the truth of it. Nothing at all like it had ever been seen on earth before He came, and therefore when He came no one understood Him. It was not till after His death—not till His disciples had received His Spirit whose function was to bear witness of Him and explain to them the meaning of what He had said and done[2]—that men were able to understand the truth about His character and to record the events of His life so that it might be made known to mankind in all subsequent ages. Their records

[1] S. John xx. 30; xxi. 25.
[2] S. John xv. 26; xvi. 12–15; 1 Cor. xii. 3.

are sufficient, because in them are to be found the spiritual principles on which He habitually acted, and the one all-embracing motive which was the cause of all that He said and did. They are to be found, but not easily or by all who read the New Testament. Christ gives us the records to study, promising us the guidance of His Spirit in our study, and then asks us in the power of the same Spirit to imitate His character, as we discover gradually what it is like, i.e. to act on the principles on which He acted, and to make His motive power our own in all the different circumstances and relationships of our life. In this double way alone—through study and through our efforts to imitate His life—do we come to understand His character. He and He alone is to be our example. The lives of holy men and women who influence and inspire us are meant to point us to Him. We are not to try to imitate anyone else, except in so far as he points us to Christ, the one only perfect example. In no other is the perfect character seen in which all the Christian virtues are manifested together in complete harmony. SS. Paul and Barnabas, for example, possessed Christian virtues in wonderful perfection. Yet each failed to manifest the Christian character at a critical time. Otherwise at the great trial of their friendship they would not have parted from each other with sharp contention, feeling unable to work together any more.[1]

In like manner most of the greatest saints whose lives we know of are seen to have failed signally at times in one or more of the Christian virtues, to have progressed gradually towards a true imitation of Christ, and to have attained at last through many one-sided developments to something like the perfect balance and harmony of the character of Christ.

His character, however, appears perfect, without flaw of any kind at each stage of His life. This is, indeed, so plain and so universally acknowledged by those who have studied His life and also have sufficient spiritual perception to appreciate its beauty, that it is hard to understand how any of them can think He is no more than a man. For it

[1] Acts xv. 36–40.

would be not only the strangest thing in our world's history, but a contradiction of all the rest of it, that one man at one period of history should have been perfect in character, and should have shown no sign and manifested no consciousness of sin; and that of all the millions before or since, no one has been heard of who has arrived within measurable distance of His perfection; and further, that all the men and women who have imitated Him the most (whose lives are known to us) have considered themselves amongst the chief of sinners, just because, living in close communion with Him, they saw their own lives in contrast with His. In all else the history of mankind shows constant progress, the leaders of thought and action in each generation handing on something that the next improves upon. Francis Bacon was a man through whom, in the realm of mind, mankind can be said to have had a new birth: the result has been that thousands of men since his time have gained more knowledge than he ever dreamed of. And he is but a remarkable instance of what is happening throughout man's history. But if Christ was only a man through whom, in the realm of spirit, mankind can be said to have had a new birth, how is it to be accounted for that since His time no one in two thousand years has not only not surpassed, but has not even approached nearly to His spiritual perfection? We do not expect that there ever will be on earth anyone to equal Him—anyone who can do more than attain to some part of His perfection. It is therefore natural to hope that the more His character is studied the more it will be seen that the witness it bears to its own origin is overwhelming: that His is indeed the character of no mere man, but of the eternal God Himself, who for the everlasting glory of our race assumed our nature, and so enabled humanity to possess and manifest His character, that at last all who partake of humanity, and indeed, as S. Paul teaches, all His rational creatures may possess it too.

It is an entirely simple character: that of one who loves perfectly and always. The different virtues which go to make up the Christian character are only different aspects of love, or love manifested in the different relationships of our life.

See S. Matt. xxii. 35–40 ; vii. 12 ; xx. 25–28 ; Rom. xiii. 8–10 ; 1 Cor. xiii. 1–8 ; Gal. v. 14 ; vi. 2 ; 1 S. John iv. 7, 8, 16, 19–21.

It will help us considerably if we realize that the Christian character can be described thus simply. For it will enable us to understand that the aim which Christ puts before us is also an entirely simple one, however many and difficult the complications of our life may be.

But it is not easy to realize this : the truth of the above statement is not manifest at once. For we are accustomed to think of many Christian virtues and to give a separate name to each of them. We know that we can possess some of them without having others. And our life and its struggle is apt to appear to us an extremely complicated affair. It is therefore well worth while for us to dwell on the truth that the Christian character (and therefore the aim of our life) is an entirely simple one. It is, as we said, the character of God, and God is one, *omnino simplex*. He is love. His whole Being is simply one eternal act of love. He manifests Himself, indeed, in manifold ways, but that is only to say that He manifests His love to different people, or to the same people at different times, in one or more of its many aspects. In like manner the character of Jesus Christ, who is God living a human life, is altogether simple. He is love. All His thoughts, words, and deeds are those of love. Different manifestations or aspects of His love can each be named a separate virtue : patience, mercy, etc. ; but each is love brought to bear on people whose needs are of different kinds.

It will help us to understand this if we bear in mind the meaning of the Greek word ἀγάπη (agape) which is used in the New Testament to describe the highest kind of love—the love that God *is* and that He commands us to exercise and live by. Our word ' love ' is used as a translation of several Greek words, whose meanings differ considerably. This word means love which is at once the desire for, and the actual giving of ourselves to obtain, the good of others. It is quite distinct from other kinds of ' love ' which are the desire to get some satisfaction for ourselves. It is thus a

moral virtue, since it is nothing else than the voluntary giving of a person's self to obtain some good for others, as distinct from the 'love' or likings which are in our nature, and are not the result of acts of our will, to the exercise of which, therefore, we cannot be commanded. These latter are implanted in our nature in order that our race may be preserved and increased. They cause us to feel 'I like this person or thing, and want him or it for myself.' They have self for their object. The animals have similar loves or likings in their natures, and for the same reason. But there is this difference, that in us all our affections for persons—our natural desire to get what we can out of them—are intended to be so many different channels through which the highest love may flow. This highest love is of a precisely opposite kind. It is at once the desire and the striving that God's will may be done, and that all the people with whom we are in any kind of relationship may obtain the highest good that is possible for them. It has not self for its object at all, except in so far as there is in it the desire that we ourselves may become as useful as possible to God and our fellow-men.

We have only to consider carefully what such love implies and effects, to become aware that all the Christian virtues are but different aspects or manifestations of it; that it is the one thing needful for us all; that every advance towards Christian perfection is an advance in love, and every failure to attain to Christ's standard is a failure in love. S. Paul's description of it in 1 Cor. xiii. shows that he was quite sure of this. He begins by telling the Corinthians, who prided themselves on the possession of remarkable gifts, that no gifts are of any use whatever without it. And, 'if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love,' i.e. if I have done all that merely to gain a reputation or future bliss for myself, 'it profiteth me nothing.' And then he goes on to show that love is the one thing needful, because it contains within itself all the Christian virtues. 'Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is

not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things . . . never faileth.'

We shall consider this again at length when we study our Lord's own analysis of the Christian character.

It is sufficient now to remind ourselves that every deliberate sin we have ever done against God was done because we did not love Him sufficiently to refrain from doing what caused us pleasure or brought us satisfaction of some kind, though we knew it was contrary to His will and caused Him grief; and that every deliberate sin we have ever done against our neighbour was done because we did not love him, i.e. seek his good sufficiently to refrain from doing what gave us pleasure and satisfaction, though it caused harm to him. Also, that whenever we have failed to give what we knew God was asking us to give for Him or for someone else, our failure has in every case been a failure in love. On the other hand, that all our acts of any Christian virtue have been done because we loved God or our neighbours sufficiently to do or bear for Him or for them what cost us something, spending ourselves to some extent in His or their service. The study of Christ's life reveals its secret—that He loved perfectly and always His Father and all the people with whom He came in contact, giving Himself completely to do His Father's will and to obtain the highest possible good for all His fellow-men. He manifested His love for His Father by giving Himself with the whole force of His will to lead a life of prayer, that He might be in constant union with Him and so know what He desired at every moment, and obtain strength from day to day to fulfil His will. His love to His fellow-men was manifested in a variety of ways in response to their manifold needs, but it was always love which meant the giving of Himself for their sakes that their lives might be fulfilled, whatever it cost Him to effect it. In fact, throughout Christ's life on earth human nature was undergoing its supreme trial. Could the human nature of anyone bear the glory of the Divine life: could human nature ever—in anyone—love as God loves? It

was this which was being decided. And human nature in Christ emerged from the trial wholly triumphant. When our Lord on the Cross commended His human spirit into His Father's hands, human nature had become a new thing —there was, as S. Paul puts it, ' a new creation ' : human nature now existed which did love with the Divine love, which did possess the character of God—that of One who loves perfectly and always.

This character is not natural to man, for it is God's character : but man was created that he might possess it, and that his nature might be fulfilled by it.

Though this follows from what has been already said, yet the statement requires some explanation and defence. For it may be said that if man was made to possess the Christian character, it is natural to him. And indeed it is in some sense true, as S. Augustine said, that the human soul is naturally Christian. Yet it is also true that man does not by nature possess the Christian character. This is no mere question of a difference in the use of a word. It is, I believe, a fact that brings with it strength and reassurance of which we are in constant need, that the character which Christ is trying to form in us is one which is supernatural to man. Let us consider what is meant by this. When we speak of the natural endowments of creatures, we mean those which enable them to preserve their own lives and propagate their species. The natural powers of all creatures are meant to be used for themselves. By nature, therefore, the creatures cannot be said to be other than selfish—for self. This is especially apparent in the animals which surround us. They obviously obey their nature by living entirely for themselves and their offspring. Yet in the case of many animals of which men make pets and companions, something higher seems to have been produced in them. Through constant contact with mankind, and especially with children, they appear at times to rise above their nature and to act not only for their own sakes but for their owners.

The story told in R. Browning's ' Tray ' is a remarkable

instance of what many have seen. If such actions are thus rightly interpreted, they appear to show that some animals can be partially raised by man into a condition which is supernatural to them—can be given some small share in man's own life. And this may be a beginning of that transformation of the lower creation through man of which S. Paul speaks in Rom. viii. 19–21. At any rate, it may help us to understand what is meant by saying that the Christian character is supernatural to man. Man, like the animals, is endowed with powers and faculties for living and enjoying life in his own kingdom, and for producing and rearing his offspring. His natural powers are far higher than those of the animals. They include intellectual powers, and above all the power to choose freely what he will do instead of living as they do in blind obedience to physical instincts. These natural powers of man are so immeasurably higher than those of even the highest animals that man can be said to be made 'in the image of God.' We can imagine man living a merely human life which was very delightful, intellectual, and attractive—the life of what S. Paul calls 'the natural man' (ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος).[1] But the entire revelation of God's purpose for him shows that no man was ever intended to do so. Man was meant from the first not merely for life in the human kingdom, but for that of the kingdom of heaven, which is supernatural to him. This does not mean that he was intended to live a human life for a period of years on earth, and, if he did well in that, to be translated into life in a higher kingdom after death. From the first moment when he became capable of knowing the difference between God's will and the desires of his own nature, he was meant to choose to do God's will rather than his own—to live in a kingdom higher than his own—a life which is therefore supernatural rather than natural to him. This wonderful purpose of God for man was foreshadowed to some extent in all the lower orders of creation, since parts of each order are meant to be taken up into the next higher order and to mingle with its life—parts of the mineral kingdom into the

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

vegetable—of the vegetable into the animal—of the animal into the kingdom of man. In all those cases, however, the ascent is involuntary. Man's case is wholly different. His whole race, and not merely parts of it, was meant for life in the kingdom of heaven—the highest kingdom of all. And each individual in the race was therefore endowed with the capacity for accepting voluntarily the powers of that kingdom and making them his own, i.e. for choosing to live habitually the life that God offered him instead of one that was merely a human life.

We know through Christ, as no one could know before He came, what this means. It means nothing less than this, that man, i.e. every man, can possess God's own character and live the life that Christ Himself lived on earth and lives still in heaven. Human nature is so wonderful a creation that God could and did make it His own, to live in it and manifest His character through it for ever.

I said that this truth, that the Christian character is not natural to man, though he was made to possess it, is a reassuring one. It undoubtedly is so to us whose consciences are perpetually accusing us of failing to attain to the standard of life that Christ sets before us. When we realize what God is demanding of us, this cannot be disheartening as it would otherwise be. He is asking us to choose, and to persevere day by day in choosing, the life of the kingdom of heaven which is invisible, and therefore very difficult to realize, instead of that of the world which is visible to us and full of attractions. He is asking us to say 'no' to all the promptings of our nature so far as they would lead us out of the heavenly path; to lead a supernatural and not a mere natural life. Can we be surprised then that obedience to God is extremely difficult and only to be attained by slow degrees? Our vocation being what it is, the standard which Christ sets before us must always be just beyond our present grasp. Day by day we have to make difficult ventures of faith through which to gain sufficient strength to rise above our nature and attain to Christ's standard. And as we make them, that standard rises day by day, so that the whole process has to be repeated continually. Our

struggle is, indeed, a blessed and joyous one, far beyond all other kinds of struggle that we have to engage in; but it is necessarily one which involves as much difficulty as we can bear. If man is to live as God lives and attain His character, it must be that his will is habitually exerted to the utmost of his capacity.

There is, however, a good deal more to be said if the whole case is to be before our minds, so that we may understand on the one hand how it is possible, and on the other why it is so hard, to be a Christian.

Therefore God is constantly and by a variety of means sowing in the hearts of men seeds which are capable of producing in them the strength and beauty of His own character.

Our human nature, as we have seen, is to be considered in itself only as soil in which can be sown seeds of the supernatural life for which man was created. But the nature of every member of the race is soil of this kind. It is what S. Paul calls the 'eternal purpose' of God that each person should receive the Divine life through Christ, and should through the obedience of his own will produce the fruits of it. And therefore God must be, because He is what He is, always at work in each person's life as a husbandman in his vineyard.[1]

The innumerable ways in which God works in men to fulfil His purpose may conveniently be classified under two heads, as the methods by which He gives (1) actual grace, and (2) habitual grace. The former includes all the inspirations He gives to us directly or indirectly to desire and to choose a life of love instead of one of selfishness. They come to us in manifold ways: through every vision of beauty which touches our hearts whether it is seen in 'nature' or in our fellow-creatures; through every heroic deed we see or hear of; through all manifestations of self-sacrificing love; through every book of prose or poetry which stirs our imagination and points us in the direction of love; through the needs and sorrows of people whom we come in contact with or read about; by all the stirrings of our

[1] S. John xv. 1.

consciences which accuse us of selfishness and show how hideous a thing it is; by all the love—the undeserved love—which is poured out on us by others; above all by everything which reminds us of or enables us to realize better what God Himself has done and is perpetually doing for us, sinners though we are, which tells of His unwearied patience and forgiving faithful love.

We have only to reflect on our daily experience to realize that God never ceases to urge us to give ourselves in love, under all circumstances; that He never allows us to be content with the standard we have attained to, but is for ever showing us new and higher ways of love; that the Eternal Love pursues us everywhere and at all times in His endeavour to induce us to partake more fully of Himself.

And whenever He succeeds through these constant inspirations in implanting in our souls penitence for our lack of love and desire to love better, on account of which we go to Him as the Source of all love to obtain more of it, then He showers upon us 'habitual grace,' i.e. gifts of Christ's own life and power of self-sacrifice. The sacraments of His Church are the chief means by which He imparts to us His gifts of love, and especially that sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood through which we can partake of the Humanity of Christ which, completely offered as a sacrifice, is glorified in heaven, filled with and wholly living by the Divine love. This is the seed for which human nature was created, and this holy sacrament, constantly repeated, is God's chief method of sowing it. He has innumerable other means of sowing beyond this, circling round it so to speak, and preparing for it. But always 'the sower soweth the word'—God, that is, imparts to men His own re-created humanity: He gives Christ to us, and in seed form because that is the only means through which we can make His life our own. For as seed and soil must combine to produce the fruits of the earth, so God's seed and sinners must combine if they are to be transformed into His own likeness.

There is no doubt very much that is discouraging in our lives: it is very hard indeed, and God wishes it to be so, for us to live the Christian life. But this is not the

first or the chief thing on which our minds should dwell. They should dwell first and always on the fact that God is wholly for us ; that it is His eternal purpose—the purpose which is part of Himself, of His Word—that we should be filled with Christ's life and live for ever as true sons of God ; that His perpetual seed-sowing, of which we can all become aware if we take pains to reflect on what is happening to us, is for the fulfilment of His purpose for each of us ; that we *can*, therefore, fulfil His purpose, however great our difficulties and temptations may be. God is actually now and always sowing the seeds of Christ's life in our hearts.

Every time we say a faithful and unselfish prayer, a seed of Divine love comes in response ; every time we do an unselfish loving deed for God or man, our reward is to receive more seeds of love that we may rise to more devotion when the next opportunity comes ; every time we go to God in penitence because we have failed in love, more love is showered on us that our failure may become a stepping-stone on which we rise to higher things.

Since this is so—because God is the Sower, and the seed is the Word of God, and the sowing is a constant process—nothing is impossible to us that God inspires us to aim at. His inspirations must be in accord with His sowing. He knows what He sows in us, and what His seed can become in each of us when we combine with Him : His inspirations, therefore, are simply indications as to how we are to combine with Him ; what we are to think, say and do, in the ever changing circumstances of our life.

Our part is to increase in the habit of listening for the whispers of His Spirit, and to act in accordance with them fearlessly and confidently, however difficult or unexpected they may be.

But these seeds are sown in uncongenial soil and have to grow in us in spite of the fierce opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

See, e.g., Rom. vii. 7–24 ; Eph. vi. 11, 12 ; 1 Pet. v. 8 ; S. Luke iv. 1–13 ; S. John xv. 18–20 ; xvii. 14.

This is the other side of the truth about our condition,

on which it is not good to dwell until our minds are filled with the gospel we have just considered.

That we may attain the Christian character, good seed-sowing is not the only necessity: there must be also the co-operation of the soil. God cannot by all the force at His disposal make His life and character to become ours. We alone can do that. He at the most can sow within us (1) seeds of desire for it in our minds and hearts, (2) seeds of power to attain it. But as no seed that man sows can bear fruit apart from the soil it is intended for, so the seeds that God sows in us cannot bear fruit apart from the exercise of our wills.

This fact causes a considerable degree of difficulty to many minds. They think, why could not God make us good and altogether loving; why should the difficulties we experience as we try to imitate Christ ever have been allowed to be? This difficulty does not exist only in shallow minds who make no serious attempt to get below the surface. It was felt, e.g., by such a philosopher as J. S. Mill. He comments on the fact that man 'by the exercise of his own energies . . . has the power to do for himself and other creatures vastly more than God had in the first instance done.' And he says 'it is a very strange supposition to make concerning the Deity . . . to suppose that He could not in the first instance create anything better than . . . an Andaman islander, or something still lower, and yet was able to endow . . . the islander with the power of raising himself into a Newton or Fénélon.' It is indeed strange that a man of his power of thought or anyone else who has had much experience of life and has taken the trouble to reflect upon it, should have considered it possible for God to create perfectly loving beings by His mere word, or that any created being could attain to a character which resembled that of Christ without a long course of intense struggle against difficulties. But as the matter is misunderstood by many good people, let us consider how the case stands. The character we are dealing with is that of one who loves, i.e. gives himself for others. But he can only give himself for others if he himself wills to do so.

The fact that God desires a man to do so, and created him that he might do so, does not cause him to do it. If such a thing *were* possible, the love that was in exercise would be God's love, not the man's, and God would merely be exercising His love by means of an automaton.

The most that God can do, if He desires the existence of persons who can love as Christ does and so share in the Divine life, is to create beings who have the power to choose what they will do, and then to induce and empower them to love, i.e. give themselves for Him and for others. When He has done that, He has to wait for the exercise of the people's own wills in the desired direction. Apart from this they do not and cannot love : no power of God can make them holy.

Further, when we consider our case, i.e. that God intends man to love as He Himself loves, and so become in a true sense *Divine*, we can understand that man's difficulties must be as great as he can possibly bear, so that the whole force of which his will is or can be made capable, may be in exercise in his perpetual choosing to serve God and his fellow-men rather than to live for himself.

With this in our minds we can dare to face without discouragement the actual condition in which we live—the truth about the human soil in which God's seeds of love are being sown.

In the first place we have to bear in mind that when the seed of Christ's life began to be sown in us (probably in the case of all of us at our Baptism in our infancy), it was sown in soil which was uncongenial—not inclined for it, so to say. Our souls then, even though we had not yet been able to commit any deliberate sin, were inclined towards selfishness rather than love. As Christian theology has usually put it, we were born in a condition of ' original sin.' It would take us too far away from our subject to enter upon the controversies that have been and are now being waged on this subject. It is sufficient for our present purpose to note the fact which, however it may be accounted for, is one of universal experience, that when we begin life our souls are not only not inclined towards love, but are not even in a

neutral condition as regards love and selfishness : they are very strongly biased towards the latter. Every baby is in all his unconscious movements obviously for himself, and as soon as he becomes able to choose deliberately one thing rather than another, he chooses habitually what makes for his own pleasure or satisfaction. We have probably never seen any exceptions to this rule. It has been recorded in the lives of a few saints, e.g. S. Faith, S. Catherine of Siena, S. Francis de Sales, S. Bride, that from the time they began a conscious life they chose to do things for God rather than for themselves. But if these accounts are true, they only afford a few startling exceptions which forcibly draw our attention to what is practically the universal rule, that everyone inclines strongly ' by nature ' to be selfish from the first.

This is, indeed, to put the case too mildly. The fact is that as soon as children have learnt to distinguish between what is right and wrong—as soon as their consciences begin to say ' I ought ' and ' I ought not '—they usually choose what is wrong, and can only with great difficulty be trained to choose what is right. That is to say, when God sows the seeds of Divine love in us, they are sown in what is from the first very uncongenial soil, so that they have to grow in spite of the fierce opposition of our ' flesh,' i.e. our human nature considered in itself.[1]

Then, from the time that a child becomes conscious of himself as a member of the society of men, the seeds of love that God has sown within him have to endure the constant attacks of ' the world.' The meaning of this expression in the New Testament and in Christian theology is human society so far as it is organised merely for its own pleasure or gain, and therefore apart from Christ and His teaching and influence. It constitutes a very powerful force, and one which is in close alliance with man's natural selfishness, in opposition both to the idea and practice of unselfish love.

[1] The discoveries as to the content of the subconscious realm of our nature which are being made for us by the new psychology, are enabling our generation to measure and understand this opposition of ' the flesh ' to a far greater extent than was possible to former generations.

It is all the more dangerous because it can produce a great variety of attractions which appeal with great force to the passions of our nature, whereas the attractions of unselfish love do not appeal to our senses at all: they are of the heavenly kingdom that 'cometh not with observation' and can only be realised through ventures of faith that always must be leaps in the dark. We can all remember the force with which 'the world'—the ordinary public opinion around us—was brought to bear on us even at school, and how extremely difficult it was then, as it has been since, to obey our consciences in spite of it; how easy and natural it was to seek our own enjoyment and gain, even in ways which we knew to be wicked.

Even if this were all, the Divine seed would be very severely handicapped in us. But this is not all. Our own experience combines with the teaching of the New Testament to warn us that our wrestling is not only or chiefly against flesh and blood—against our own nature and the attractions of 'the world'—but 'against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly sphere.' There are opposed to us the devil and the evil spirits under his command. He with his armies is 'the enemy' of which our Lord spoke, who not only does what he can to hinder the growth of God's seeds in our hearts, but also sows bad seeds—seeds of falsehood[1]—whereby he throws a false glamour over the attractions of the world and the desires of our own flesh, and tries to persuade us that they tend to good and not evil, towards satisfactions which God means us to seek and obtain.[2]

The teaching of our Lord and His Apostles as to the existence and power of these spiritual enemies is so plain that it will be most unwise of us to disregard it. Many seek to discredit it as an old superstition which in this enlightened age ought to be given up by sensible people.

It is frequently supposed that the teaching of the New Testament about demoniacal possession was due to ignorance of the medical science which is at our disposal now, and that our Lord and His followers were only curing diseases which

[1] S. John viii. 44. [2] See Gen. iii. 1–6.

are now understood, when they were said to be casting out devils. And it is only a short step from this to the assertion that the accounts in the New Testament of the spiritual enemies who surround us were due to a similar mistake. We who live in a non-Christian country where demoniacal possession is very frequent and can be clearly distinguished from physical or mental diseases, do not feel the difficulty, that many experience who live in Christian countries, about the New Testament teaching concerning our spiritual foes. The conflict, and the nature of the spiritual forces on both sides are far more vivid to us in India than they were in England. But in whatever country we live, our Lord's account of His own struggle, and the Apostles' account of ours, tally with our own experience far more exactly than any other explanation of it does. For our very frequent experience is of this kind: that often at our best moments, e.g. when our minds and hearts are lifted up in prayer, we are suddenly attacked by evil and hideous thoughts; when our desires and efforts are in the direction of the service of God or our fellow-men, desires of an opposite kind—of utter selfishness—are suddenly presented to us. It can of course be said, and with great plausibility, that they come up from our own subconscious mind; but even if they do, it is far more in accordance with our experiences that they were presented to it, or at least used for our deception, by evil minds outside us, than that the thoughts and the temptations which they cause were our own creation. Or again, it frequently happens to us that the temptation to some slight self-indulgence which, though it may not be wrong in itself, is understood by us to be contrary to God's will, gains such force that it may take us days or months or even years successfully to resist it. We have given up many greater pleasures because we believed that God was asking us to do so. But in this case it is as though some one were lying to us about it, and giving us many plausible reasons for thinking that God did not really want us to give it up. If it had been the case of giving up some deadly sin we should have seen through the temptation and resisted it. But in this case our mind was so confused that we

scarcely knew whether it was a temptation or not, and allowed ourselves to be persuaded over and over again that there was no harm in it. These are only instances of the kinds of experience we are subject to, which go to show that we are indeed beset by spiritual unseen foes, who have very subtle minds and a vast experience of human nature, and who are constantly engaged in lying to us and trying to persuade us that evil is good and good evil: or, to use our Lord's metaphor, in sowing seeds of falsehood and selfishness in our hearts, to counteract and if possible choke the seeds of truth and love that God is ever sowing.

Hence, though our minds may quickly gain a true idea of it, which makes us admire and greatly desire it, the Christian character only becomes our own gradually and through much struggle and many disappointments. Hence also many of the failures we deplore are only necessary steps towards the attainment of that perfection of the Christian character towards which God is leading us.

We all acknowledge that the character of Christ is not only the most beautiful we have ever heard of, but is the most perfect we can imagine. When we meet or read of people whose characters at all resemble His in its strength and beauty, we reverence and love them.

There are many people on earth who do not admire Christ's character—e.g. there are very many Mussulmans in India and elsewhere who consider that a great despot, who takes vengeance on his enemies, is far more admirable than one who manifests the gentleness of Jesus Christ. And there are, alas! many Englishmen who are inclined to agree with them that meekness is weakness which springs from cowardice, rather than strength which springs from love.

But you make no such mistake. Christ, you know, is perfect in character—His is the strongest and most beautiful conceivable—because His whole life is one perfect act of love. That you understand, even though you are only gradually realizing what it means. And your hearts are touched at once by any manifestations of His beauty that you see in your fellow-men.

Our minds are indeed so entranced by Christ's perfection that the imitation of Him appears to us obviously the only thing to aim at. This, however, is apt to mislead us in certain directions, and so to cause us to get out of heart without cause and even to mistake progress for retrogression.

For instance, because the beauty of Christ's character is so plainly in our minds, we are apt to make the mistake of supposing that we understand its content much more completely than we do, the truth being that our Lord can only show us little by little, taking us one step at a time, what is implied in being a Christian. We can all recall times when we learned suddenly what love implies through inspirations which were entirely new to us. God was telling us that if we loved Him and our neighbour, we must do this or surrender that for love's sake. He had never been able to make this clear to us before. But as soon as it did become clear, it appeared so obviously true that we felt we ought to have known it always. And perhaps it disheartened us considerably to reflect that God had been calling us for years, and had been feeding us with His own life, yet we had never done for Him this that He was asking us to do. It must have been, we supposed, that we had been failing very badly, or we should have done it long ago : or that there must be some deep-rooted iniquity in us, of which we were not aware, that had caused our blindness.

This was sufficiently disturbing. But there was probably worse to come. For now that we had heard these new words of God, or had seen the new vision of what love implies, it probably seemed to us that we could never fail in the same way again—could never refuse to give God what He was asking for. Yet perhaps our very next confession revealed the fact that we had failed in the same way again and again. The beauty of Christ's character, apprehended more clearly now, was so vividly in our minds that we supposed it had already become our character—was our own possession in the same degree as the idea of it had become a possession of our minds. These late failures of ours seemed therefore worse and more disheartening than the former ones. To have seen so clearly what God wanted

and then to have failed to give it, must be even worse than not to have seen it sooner.

Yet there was perhaps no cause for discouragement in either experience. On the contrary, it may have been, and probably was, that what we thought of as bad failures were only necessary experiences without which we could not have increased either in the knowledge or practice of Divine love.

S. Peter's is a very encouraging story to all of us who are trying to follow Christ and to learn from Him how to love. He had travelled about with our Lord, had heard His teaching, had seen His wonderful works, had understood much about the strength and beauty of His character. In particular, he had been amazed at the wonderful courage with which He faced the sufferings and death which He knew awaited Him at Jerusalem. He had seen Him steadfastly set His face to go there, that He might fulfil His Father's will, though He need not have gone.[1] And seeing and admiring this steadfast, faithful courage, he felt that he himself possessed it. Accordingly, on the night of the betrayal, when Jesus said 'All ye shall be offended in me this night,' he answered 'If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended . . . even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.'[2] He was entirely in earnest in saying so, as was shown later on when he drew his sword and risked his life in the garden. He could not believe that he could deny his Master and behave like a coward as Jesus said he would. And we have to note that though it seemed afterwards to Peter that he had failed miserably—as badly as it was possible to fail considering what his Master had been to him—it did not appear to our Lord that he had failed at all. He had spoken the simple truth when He said 'Thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow afterwards.[3] Some seeds of love had indeed been planted in his soul, but in soil that was not yet capable of producing anything but a slight promise of fruit. In other words, the enemies of love were too much for him: his own flesh, which though it braved all opposition at first, could not bear the thought of

[1] S. Luke ix. 51; S. Mark x. 32.
[2] S. Matt. xxvi. 31–35.
[3] S. John xiii. 36.

imprisonment and death when the first excitement was over ; the opinion of ' the world '—the contempt of the people all round him if he confessed that he was a disciple of the impostor who had just been apprehended; the devil, who no doubt whispered to him some lie as that he would be of much more use to his Master if he were to escape now and be free to act, instead of being imprisoned with Him. As we read his story we can see that his seeming failure was but a necessary step towards the gaining of the love that was to fill his soul afterwards. Without some such terrible experience the self-confidence which was so strong in him could never have been subdued, and entire trust in Christ for all the strength of love that he needed could never have been evoked. Our Lord's words to him after the Resurrection, as recorded by S. John, show that his sad experience had already had the desired result—he had at least begun to learn that apart from Christ he could do nothing in the way of love. But that is a lesson which no one learns once for all. If the tradition concerning the end of S. Peter's life is true, it shows that he had to learn it again for his last and greatest struggle, by his victory wherein his life of devotion to his beloved Lord was crowned and glorified.

We all have to learn the same lesson in the same kind of way. For we usually begin to try to serve God with the same kind of self-confidence as S. Peter's. Though it is about thirty-five years ago, I well remember the experience of a party of us who went together from Oxford to Cuddesdon to be prepared for Holy Orders. Till that time we had had very few serious thoughts about our ' vocation.' We had thought that we should probably end by ' going into the Church,' though we should have much preferred to go into the army. And when at last we came to think that we must choose ' the Church,' we inquired, I remember, from some who ought to have guided us, whether there would be any harm in trying to get a curacy or a living in places where there would be good shooting or fishing or hunting, and we were told that since our tastes lay in those directions and were innocent, there would be no harm in it !

Then we went to Cuddesdon, and after a time there

broke upon us an entirely new vision. Though it was not so sudden as S. Paul's, it had the effect of changing our whole outlook on life almost as completely. We came to understand what Christ had been calling us for : what kind of service He required of us. We came to realize to some extent the glorious beauty of His life and that we were called and were to be enabled to imitate Him. We understood that we were to work not where life would be easy, but where workers were the most needed ; that we were to lead a life of self-sacrificing love ; that, since we could not do this of ourselves, we were to trust habitually to prayer and the Sacraments for strength to do it. It all seemed quite plain, and we felt quite confident that we could do it all. When at our annual festival we walked in procession with a large number of old Cuddesdon men, now priests, and sang the 63rd Psalm, we felt sure that as soon as we all got to work with this vision in our minds and hearts, the enemies of God would indeed be scattered. And when old experienced priests used to come and give us addresses from time to time, and tell us how difficult it was to be a faithful priest and how long it took to learn to follow Christ, we wondered a good deal and supposed that they had never had the opportunity we had had of seeing the heavenly vision before they began. We were inclined to say, as S. Peter said, 'Why cannot we follow Him even now?' We could not have believed then that thirty-five years hence we should look back on our life since our Ordination and see that it appeared as a long succession of failures to do and to be what we had felt sure when we began that we should do and should be : and that it would seem to us as though we had scarcely yet begun to learn to be humble or loving—could scarcely yet dare to say that we had even begun to be disciples.

You Sisters have, no doubt, had somewhat similar experiences. When you first made your Profession and gave yourselves wholeheartedly to the service of Christ and of your fellow-men for His sake, you did not know and could not have believed that it would be so extremely difficult as it has been to keep your vows. The idea of the Christian

life and character was so vividly in your minds and appeared to you so clearly as the only possible one to aim at, that you supposed you possessed it. And you, too, have had to learn, through a long series of what seem like failures, that Christ's character, being supernatural to man, can only become yours through struggles which are as hard as you can bear, and which therefore test your wills to the uttermost and evoke from you efforts as strenuous and continuous as you are capable of making.

Therefore the consciousness of failure should produce in us not 'the sorrow of the world' which 'worketh death,' but the 'godly sorrow' which 'worketh repentance unto salvation' (2 Cor. vii. 10). The false sorrow proceeds from pride and tends to the loss of what spiritual life we have. It can be recognized in that it disheartens us, fixes our minds on ourselves, and so impairs our trust in Christ and tends to keep us away from Him.

Our failures are all caused by lack of love. The consciousness of them therefore should send us at once to Christ, through Whom all love flows to us.

Let us remind ourselves once more that the character which Christ is always at work to produce in us is that of God Himself—no less. This means that He is always inspiring and enabling us to love as God loves, i.e. with love that is a perpetual act of self-giving. And we are sinners who are by nature inclined to live for self instead of to give self, and who are constantly tempted by mighty forces outside ourselves to manifold forms of selfishness.

It is inevitable, therefore, that the more strenuously we strive to live in accordance with God's will the more conscious we become of our failure to do so. As we said, that which Christ puts before us as our aim, is always beyond our present grasp, and is intended to evoke from us faith in Him by which we can attain to that which is impossible to us apart from Him.

But our sense of failure does not always have this effect. It may produce in us what S. Paul calls 'the sorrow of the world,' i.e. a sorrow which is little more than a sense of disappointment with ourselves, and is itself the result of yielding to temptations to self-love. It may produce in us

deep and prolonged grief without any true repentance, and cause much loss of vital energy with which we ought to have been serving Christ in the present instead of spending it on what is past. We read often in books on the Christian life about the necessity of abiding sorrow for past sins. We must be careful lest we misunderstand such teaching. It leads some people to dwell on the past, on what might have been, which usually means what *they* might have been if they had not yielded to temptation. That is not true repentance. That only rivets our attention on ourselves, and so causes us to lose heart and to be oblivious of our present union with our Lord. This is why S. Paul says that such sorrow 'worketh death': it tends to make us live in ourselves instead of abiding in Him who is the one only source of life and love.

Consciousness of deliberate sin as well as the sense of constant failure to attain to Christ's ideal should have one result only. All sin and all failure is the result of lack of love, and Christ is the one source of love. Sorrow for sin or failure which does not amount to deliberate sin, should therefore drive us to Christ always—should cause us to lift up our hearts above ourselves to Him, our Saviour, our most loving Friend, our constant Companion, who goes on calling and trusting us as though we had not failed. We failed Him or His people because we were selfish and either did not or could not then love as He desires us to love. And the desire which true repentance begets in us is not to fail Him again now or in future. And that desire sends us at once to Him, who says 'without me ye can do nothing' in the way of love; it increases our trust in Him; it brings us a step nearer to the condition described by S. Paul—'I live, (and yet) no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and that (life) which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, (the faith) which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.'[1]

That is the conclusion of this matter. Trust Christ. Put your whole trust in Him. We may go to and trust to other people for help of various kinds in our struggle to be

[1] Gal. ii. 20; cf. Heb. iv. 14–16; xii. 1, 2; Phil. iii. 8–14.

Christians. But their duty is always to lead us to trust to Christ as the one only source of love, and thus to enable Him to fulfil in us the purpose for which we were created and called to be members of His Body.

We cannot imagine how wonderful this purpose of His is, but we can trust Him with all our hearts that He is able and is constantly at work to fulfil it even in people who have been and are as weak and selfish and unloving as we.

When such trust in Christ is our abiding possession, then we can gladly and without fear proceed to consider what our Lord has taught us about the many-sided glory of the Christian character : teaching which, if we trusted not in Christ but only in ourselves, would drive us more and more to despair the more we studied it.

PART II

The Christian Character, in Detail

We are now to consider the Christian character in the light of our Lord's analysis of it in 'the Beatitudes,' S. Matt. v. 3–10. He calls them 'blessed' who possess the different virtues of which the Christian character is made up—the virtues which are in fact nothing else than love (ἀγάπη) in action in the different relationships of our life. The word 'blessed' implies at once the possession of happiness, joy and peace or satisfaction. Blessedness is therefore what all men, consciously or unconsciously, are striving after. Everyone's nature is meant to be satisfied or fulfilled, and to be completely 'blessed' is to have attained the fulfilment which God intended for human nature. Man, made in God's image, is destined to be fulfilled, as God Himself is, by love, which is another way of saying that he is meant to possess the character of God. This, as we said, seems too wonderful to be true. Yet the study of the virtues which our Lord tells us cause blessedness to men, combined with our own experience of what has actually brought to us anything approaching such blessedness, points clearly to the wonderful fact that we are destined for nothing less than to be filled with the life of God Himself and so to be 'like Him.'[1]

I. POVERTY OF SPIRIT

Christ teaches that the Christian character is based on humility or poverty of spirit. S. Matt. v. 3.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

[1] 1 S. John iii. 2.

The word used for 'the poor' (πτωχοὶ) is a startling one, and must have greatly astonished those who first heard this teaching. It had never been used before to express anything that could be associated with blessedness: it had always implied a condition which was the exact reverse of blessed. A πτωχὸς is properly 'one who crouches or cringes: the word had always a bad sense till it was ennobled in the Gospels.' [1] It meant one who has nothing at all of his own and lived on other men's alms, as contrasted with a poor man who earns his living by work (πένης). Our Lord must have chosen the word to indicate that the foundation of the Christian character is to be laid as deeply as possible. But He adds 'in spirit' that we may understand He was speaking of humility not penury, as S. Jerome says. Though His teaching and example indicate that He considered it much better for a man to be literally poor than rich, because of the great danger of earthly riches, there is no indication that He considered a condition of abject poverty to be good, or anything but a great evil caused by the selfishness of the rich. And, as we know well, a man who is poor in this world's goods may be very grasping in spirit, just as a rich man may be poor in spirit.

But He does teach clearly, and the teaching is enforced by the example of His whole life on earth, that a man must be as poor as possible in spirit if he is to attain to the Christian character. It is evident that He wished the word πτωχὸς to have its full force.

The poor in spirit are they who know and act upon the truth that God is their Creator, their Redeemer, their Sanctifier. The virtue of humility is not created in us by pretence that we are not what we are, or have not the powers we are conscious of possessing: that produces only the spurious humility that is rightly hated by all honest people. True humility is formed in us only as we act upon the truth of our relation to God.

God is our Creator, not merely because He made us at the first, but because He gives us at every moment all the life and power we have. He is our Redeemer, because in

[1] Liddell and Scott.

and through Jesus Christ, i.e. through His own incarnate life, He has made our nature new, and has therefore made it possible for all men to possess the Christian character, which apart from Christ would have been impossible for them. He is our Sanctifier, because He is continually through His Spirit offering to us gifts of grace, i.e. gifts of Christ's life—of the Divine love which fills Christ's humanity—by which if we accept and use them we can gradually become more and more Christlike, until at last Christ is perfectly 'formed in'[1] us and our character is in all the relationships of our life like His.

Now it is true that, even though we do not consciously depend on God or thank Him for them, God continues to give us innumerable gifts. He continues to us our physical life, and along with it powers and affections through which can come to us great enjoyment physical and mental, through which also we can form ties with other people that produce great happiness. But this is not the case, because it cannot be, in the matter of His highest gifts—those spiritual endowments by which we can become like Christ in character. With respect to these, He says to us, So live, i.e. consciously, deliberately, that you may abide in Me and I in you. 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.'[2] And to abide in Christ, as they know well who have tried to do it, implies a strenuous and constant effort to commune with Him; a conscious dependence on Him for the power of self-sacrificing love which we continually need but do not possess by nature; entire poverty of spirit—a relationship to Christ which can be compared, as He compares it, with that of an abject beggar to those on whom he depends for alms.

Here, however, we are met by the objection that this appears to be contradicted by a great deal of our experience. It is said with truth that it is very common to find people who display Christian virtues in a marked degree, people who at times rise to great heights of devotion and self-sacrifice for their fellow-men, who do not appear to depend

[1] Gal. iv. 19. [2] S. John xv. 4.

on God at all, who certainly could not be said to live consciously with Him or to abide in Him: just as it is not uncommon, on the other hand, to find people who appear to be very religious and to pray a great deal, who are hard, unsympathetic, narrow, bigoted, and unchristian in their behaviour to large sections of their fellow-men. It has often been pointed out, nowhere perhaps more clearly than in *The Student in Arms*, that the contrast between the non-religious men who behaved like Christians and the religious people who did not, was glaringly and frequently made manifest during the war. What is to be said about it: does this kind of experience, which has probably greatly puzzled us all at times, contradict the teaching of Christ as to the necessity of conscious dependence on Him if our character is to become like His?

This is to be said in the first place: that the people whose hearts are hardened by their religion are not the humble people; they are not poor in spirit, but the reverse. They are self-satisfied, and therefore dissatisfied with and hard upon the people who are not religious as they are. Theirs is not the religion of Christ, however much they may suppose or assert that it is. Theirs is the spirit which was manifested in the religious Pharisees of our Lord's day, and which did not, alas! cease to exist when the Jewish Church did, but crept into the Church of Christ and has had its manifestations among Christians in all ages. It is not the fruit of the religion of Christ, but of the innate sinfulness of mankind. The fruit of the Spirit of Christ is 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control.'[1] If then religion produces hardness in certain Christians, as it appears to do, it is because they have used their religion in the worst way of all —to minister to instead of to cure their own sinful self-love. They are the people of whom the Lord said 'the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.'

On the other hand, there is this to be said: that we ought never to be surprised at the display of Christian virtues in

[1] Gal. v. 22, 23.

any part of Christendom, nor even outside its borders, in even the most unlikely people. For God not only was but is Incarnate. He lives in humanity as the Head of the whole human family. He is perpetually giving Himself for all the members of it, and so 'reconciling the world unto Himself.'[1]

Moreover, the Christian Church—that is, the body of people of all nations who have actually been incorporated into Christ's recreated and glorified human nature by a new birth—has been in existence for two thousand years. Though that is a very short time indeed in the history of the human race, yet in it a vast company 'out of all nations, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues' has been gathered in and made perfect, i.e. filled full with the self-sacrificing love of Christ. This glorious company serve God perfectly in heaven and intercede for and pour the influence of their holy love into the members of the Church on earth and out far beyond them, that they may draw to Christ those who as yet do not acknowledge Him. In addition to this multitude of perfected saints there is a vast host of Christians departed this life who are now being purged of the selfishness that was in them when they died, and are learning to love God and their fellow-men ever more and more perfectly. They all are united with us on earth, are praying for us, working for us, influencing us that we may become perfected in love. We can be sure of this, because they are members of Christ's Body, as we are.[2] There is also the large army of faithful Christians on earth who, in spite of many sins and failures, love Christ sincerely and their fellow-men for His sake. And every Christian on earth—every man, woman or child who has received Christ's life in Baptism—is in communion with Christ and His whole Church: each one is a member of the Body of Christ. This is true of them all, whether they know it or not, whether they try to live with Christ or not, whether they are religious or irreligious. S. Paul was writing to people who were not by any means all good Christians, people whom he had to exhort not to give way to gross sins of the flesh, filthy talk or bad temper, as well as

[1] 2 Cor. v. 19. [2] See, e.g., 1 Cor. xii. 26, 27.

those of whom he could say that he ceased not to give thanks because of what he had heard of their faith and love. Yet he said of them all ' ye are no more strangers and sojourners (i.e. outsiders), but ye are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone . . . in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.' [1] The same can be said of all Christians to-day, however little they acknowledge and consciously depend on or work with the power of Christ that works in them. Hence it ought not to surprise us that even the most unlikely people, from a religious point of view, can and do under specially stimulating circumstances or when they are fortified by the traditions of a splendid service, such as the Army or Navy or our Indian Civil Service, rise to great heights of devotion and imitate Christ in His self-sacrificing love.

Nor again should it surprise us when we see effects of Christ's life in people who are not yet Christians or who are even adherents of religions whose principles are directly opposed to those of Christ. For the influence of our Lord and His saints is flooding the world now as never before, and individuals of all creeds and races feel themselves possessed at times of forces of love whose origin they do not recognize, but which are the direct results of the incarnate life of God in the race of which they are members.

Nevertheless, when all this is acknowledged with deep thankfulness to God, our experience of mankind still shows that there is nothing in it which contradicts the teaching of Christ that poverty of spirit, entire dependence on Him for strength, is necessary if we would become like Him. For our commonest experience of ourselves and of others is that people can be like the curate's egg, ' good in parts,' while they still remain bad in other parts. Men can be and frequently are unselfish even to the extremes of heroism at times and under certain circumstances, who are so selfish in their ordinary lives that they make life almost unbearable for those who live with them. People can be very kind

[1] Ephes. ii. 19–22.

at times and very cruel at other times; can bear terrible sufferings with the utmost fortitude under certain circumstances, while at other times they grumble and make themselves extremely disagreeable when the least things go wrong. One of the most startling and beautiful chapters in *The Student in Arms* is the one entitled 'Of some who were lost and afterwards were found.' It is beautiful in that it shows the wonder of God's love, who bears with the greatest sinners to the uttermost, always giving them fresh opportunities until at last something has been found which can evoke what is best in them. It is startling in that it shows how heroic and self-sacrificing men can at times become who have hitherto been living in sin and forgetfulness of God. Such men cannot be said to possess the Christian character yet. 'God forbid,' says the author, 'that we should try to imitate them.' The most we can say of them is that their heroic end no doubt introduced them to Christ, so to speak, and was the beginning of their friendship with Him through which they are now gradually becoming more and more like Him.

But, apart from such extreme instances, is it not our ordinary experience that people's characters are an enigma? We wonder now at the good traits in them, now at the bad ones. The strangest thing in the history of Christendom is that people who seem good and loving can acquiesce for so long in practices or customs which are bad, unchristian or cruel. Those who possess the Christian character are such as are consistently loving in all the different relationships of their life. And such, we have to confess, are very rare. It is not often that we come across the really saintly people—people to whom our hearts go out at once as they would to Christ, if we saw Him—people who make us long to have done with all selfishness and to live wholly for God and our fellow-men. They are few in number just because the people who live with our Lord and depend wholly upon Him are few in number.

If we could sum up all that we have learnt from our intercourse with our fellow-men, we should see that it manifests very clearly the truth of our Lord's teaching as to the

necessity of poverty of spirit if we would gain the kingdom of heaven; we should realize that, just as communion with learned men stimulates our minds into higher action, and communion with Christlike people excites our hearts to love, in like manner only constant communion with Christ Himself—nothing less than abiding in Him—can enable any of us to become like Him in character in all our dealings with our fellow-men.

This will perhaps become clearer if we go on to consider in some detail what kind of lives they live who are 'poor in spirit'—who, realizing the truth about themselves and their relation to God, do depend as wholly on Him for power as an abject beggar depends on the alms of others.

The poor in spirit are not anxious about the things which belong only to this world: they are sure that God will provide what is necessary for those who trust to Him and try to work according to His will.

They live, in fact, in accordance with our Lord's teaching in S. Matt. vi. 19–34, S. Luke xii. 22–34, and that of His Apostles, e.g. Phil. iv. 11–13; 1 Tim. vi. 6–10, 17–19; Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

This teaching of Christ appears to very many Christians, even those who desire to follow Him, so impossible to obey that they suppose it could not have been meant for people whose circumstances are like theirs. And very many others, in happier circumstances, feel that it rebukes their way of life so severely that they are afraid to dwell on it, and are glad to relieve their consciences by anything that seems like an escape from it, such as, e.g., the theory that our Lord's ethical teaching was only meant for people who were expecting the day of judgement to come during their lifetime.

You Sisters are in a condition midway between those of the rich and the poor. You are relieved of the causes for anxiety which are felt by those who are very poor, to thousands of whom they seem an intolerable burden. You are free also from the manifold temptations which come to the rich. There is no reason why you should be anxious at all about this world's goods. All that is necessary is provided

for you. So far you have never had even to curtail or refuse work for want of funds, and you have good reason to suppose that the Sisterhood's material needs will be supplied in like manner in the future. You are therefore, in respect of material goods, in the ideal condition desired by the wise man, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me.'[1] You can therefore obey our Lord's injunctions with much perfection and give yourselves wholly to seek His kingdom and righteousness for yourselves and for all with whom you have to do. Your vow of poverty 'implies the surrender of the use of all personal property,' but it by no means implies a condition of abject want. As your Rule says, 'Though they live under a vow of Poverty the external condition of the Sisters is necessarily, in comparison with that of the poor in India, a rich rather than a poor one. Hence they will endeavour to live so apart from worldly possessions of their own that they may be entirely poor in spirit, and while they accept thankfully what is provided for them, they will be cheerfully content to do without all that is not provided.' When you consider the appalling condition of need in which millions of people still live even in Christian countries, it will appear to you very wrong indeed to give way to any anxiety or complaining about your own material lot, even though very hard times should come upon you, and the friends who are now ready to produce even more than we ask for, should no longer be able or willing to do so.

But comparatively only a few people receive your special vocation. And it is necessary to consider how our Lord's teaching on this subject applies to those who do not.

Let us think first of the people who through no fault of their own are so poor that they do not know from day to day how they are going to live. If people like ourselves, who always have enough to live on, exhort them in our Lord's words not to be anxious for their life what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, nor yet for their body, what they shall put on, it must seem to them that we are mocking them cruelly unless at the same time we supply their needs

[1] Prov. xxx. 8.

or enable them to supply their own. And when such people meet our Lord in the next world and confess to Him that their lives for many years have been filled with unceasing anxiety and dread of starvation or the workhouse, we can be quite sure He will not account it to *them* as sin that they have neglected His teaching, though we can be equally sure He will visit it on those who should have made such a condition of poverty impossible for them. Such abject poverty is, we can be sure, a condition which He hates. It is a deadly evil not a good.

Though He on earth had nothing which He called His own, yet He was not abjectly poor: His material needs were provided for Him by loving friends that He might be wholly engaged in establishing His new kingdom for the salvation of all men. But it is, alas! true that there are still on earth millions of people for whom it is practically impossible to follow this teaching of Christ. To tell them to live without anxiety about their food and clothing would be on a par with saying to a girl who had been brought up all her life among the bazaar women of this town, 'keep thyself pure.' It is no doubt true that anyone in either of these conditions who depended wholly upon God would have his needs provided for. But how are such people to depend wholly on God: how can they even think about God as He is—as their loving Father? There is no reason, except the appalling selfishness of men, why such a state of things should continue. There is enough and far more than enough of this world's goods to go round. And if all the people obeyed this teaching of our Lord who could obey it, there would be no dire poverty for anyone unless he brought it about by his own laziness or vice.

This brings us to consider how our Lord's teaching applies to all those who have already more than they need of this world's goods.

The root of the evil we have spoken of is that millions of such people all over the world are still trying hard to heap up riches for themselves or their families. They are wilfully and most culpably disobeying or ignoring our Lord's injunctions. Their minds and hearts are filled with anxious

thoughts and plans for becoming richer. It is amazing that so many rich people, who in other respects appear to be kind-hearted and loving, not only acquiesce in spending so much as they do in luxuries, but are constantly trying to get more. It is more amazing still that so many people, whose hearts seem open to love in other directions, should so eagerly and anxiously strive after possessions of their own, such as, e.g., expensive jewels, which they delight in not so much for their beauty—for there are many inexpensive things quite as beautiful—but because they are their own possessions in which other people cannot share.

It is no wonder that our Lord and His Apostles used such strong language about the danger of earthly riches. 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!' 'Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.' 'Having food and covering we shall be therewith content. But they that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.'[1]

Of all the deadly sins that have their manifestations on earth, covetousness is the worst. No other sin warps men's consciences, hardens their hearts, and blights all that is best in them to the same extent. And its extraordinary prevalence in the world, even among people who are in many of their life's relationships kind, affectionate, and self-sacrificing, is one of the strongest proofs of the truth of Christ's teaching that the Christian character is founded on humility. The poor in spirit—those who depend on God for the gifts of love which they know they do not possess by nature—are not anxious about the riches of this world. However much they may desire or delight in the things which money can procure, they do not, in view of the appalling poverty of so many of their fellow-men, desire to become rich or to have possessions merely of their own, which they cannot share with others. They seek from Christ, and seek-

[1] S. Mark x. 23–25; S. Luke xii. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

ing they obtain in ever increasing measure, the spirit of love which was manifested in the members of the infant Church of whom it is recorded that ' not one (of them) said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own,' and that ' they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need.' [1]

They live and work as men who realize that they are God's stewards in respect of all the gifts He has given them. See S. Matt. xxv. 14–30 ; *S. Luke* xix. 11–27 ; xii. 41–44.

Humility, based as it is on the truth, does not mean denying that we have powers or special gifts, but results in the grateful acceptance of whatever God gives us, and the careful training and joyful use of all the powers we have that we may fulfil the purposes for which He gave them. These can all be summed up in one—the advancement of God's kingdom of love among men. Herein lies the secret of the peace, prosperity, and perfection not only of individuals but of mankind in general. So far as men use their talents or other possessions not merely for themselves but as having received them in trust for others, the ascent of man progresses towards the ideal for which the race was and is still being created—the attainment, as S. Paul puts it, of the perfect humanity, ' the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' [2] It is through such exercise of love alone that the misery of poverty, class and race hatred, all bitterness and ill-will which keep classes, races, and nations apart, can be destroyed, and harmony, prosperity, and happiness can be increased.

We can thank God that this is far more widely understood now than at any previous time. Men in general are now learning rapidly that Christ's teaching is not unpractical for ordinary people as used to be supposed, but that it is only when His principles are maintained and acted upon that men and nations live their true life—that of the new and higher humanity. The old teaching of Political Economy was that man, being by nature a selfish animal,

[1] Acts iv. 32 ; ii. 45.

[2] Ephes. iv. 13.

can as a rule only be stirred to put forth his best powers by motives of self-interest. That teaching is becoming more and more discredited in our day. The opposite—the Christian—view is rapidly gaining ground that man is meant for the service of his fellows ; that only when he is engaged in that service can his powers have their full exercise ; that selfishness dwarfs and tends to destroy both individuals and nations ; that as the human body is one and has many members each of which is meant for the benefit of the body, so is it with humanity as a whole.

We are often inclined to think, with something like despair in our hearts, that mankind is learning this lesson very slowly indeed, and that his progress in the direction of love during the two thousand years since Christ came is very disappointing. Perhaps when we see the whole of God's purpose for man accomplished, we shall rather wonder at the extreme rapidity of his advance. We are apt to think of the two thousand years of the life of the Church of Christ as if it were a very long time. But when it is compared with the length of the life of humanity, as far as we can gauge that, it appears that the Church is as yet in its infancy, only beginning to put forth its powers. Mr. H. G. Wells has, it seems to me, greatly helped us to look at the history of Christianity in its right setting. In his *Outline of History* he has given us a rapid and very vivid sketch of the unnumbered ages during which selfishness reigned supreme on this earth, and there was no sign of what we know as self-sacrificing love. The pictures he has given of the ages—the æons—during which those creatures were paramount on earth who had some promise in them of what man was at last to be, are startling and horrible. Yet they were the creatures who were the last step in creation next to man, and out of whom man in respect of his physical organism was evolved. Real man when he at last arrived, made in God's image, had within him the tendencies, the instincts of the savage creatures whose powers were exercised wholly for themselves. It is not surprising, therefore, that, when he first became aware of himself as a creature who had the power to choose what kind of life he would live, he made

his choice rather in accordance with the fleshly, selfish instincts that were in him than in obedience to the voice of his conscience to which God spoke. We do not know how many thousands or even millions of years have passed since man's first appearance. Year by year fresh discoveries show the time to have been longer than we thought it was. But we have before our minds some idea of the slow rise of man out of his primitive savage condition till Christ came. We have to think of the race in its earliest stages as having no coherence at all, each individual seeking to get what he could from the rest by physical force : then as made up of families each opposed to all the rest : then of families combining to form clans or tribes, for purely selfish motives : then much later of tribes combining to form larger bodies, until at last such combinations had grown into vast empires, whose greatness was measured solely by the number of peoples they had subjugated and the extent of territory over which they had dominion. History tells of a long succession of great empires, one succeeding another by force of arms until the time of Christ, when the Roman Empire had become the great world power which ruled over and combined in one vast whole nearly all the countries of the civilized world. Hitherto there had been but one idea of a people's or an empire's greatness. It consisted in ruling over and subduing to its will as many countries as possible. There had been, no doubt, many individuals in different races who had felt the influence of a higher spirit. Among the Greeks were found many men of larger and nobler views. And especially in the little kingdom of Israel, in which there had been a long succession of true prophets of God, He was able to manifest more of His Spirit—the Spirit of love and service. But even in Israel the general idea of the greatness of a kingdom did not rise above that of the rest of the world. Christ was welcomed chiefly because it was supposed that He was going to make Israel great on earth, as Israel itself in former times and as other kingdoms had been great. ' Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ? ' was the last question put to our Lord by His chosen disciples before His Ascension and the coming of His Spirit into

them : and it manifests only the spirit of national selfishness which reigned then all over the world.

But by this time the Incarnation had happened. God had come to live inside humanity, and had begun to breathe His Spirit into the vast selfish mass. Though even His chosen Apostles had not yet understood Him, He had proclaimed the new idea—God's own idea—of a kingdom and kingship, and thereby had begun to show men the higher life they were capable of and destined to attain to. 'The kings of the Gentiles,' He said, 'have lordship over them ; and they that have authority over them are called Benefactors. But ye (shall) not (be) so : but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger ; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve . . . I am in the midst of you as he that serveth . . . and I appoint unto you a kingdom even as my Father appointed unto me.'[1] The kingdom He proclaimed was essentially different from the kingdoms of this world : it had another spirit ; the rule, the lordship, of it were of love, of service ; its greatness consisted in not ruling over but in ministering to its citizens. This kingdom He has established among men. Its spirit is the leaven which has ever since Pentecost been at work in humanity, and is destined at last to transform the whole lump.

Let us consider swiftly in broad outline the change that Christ's Spirit has already effected. His Church was planted in the Roman Empire, whose wonderful organization enabled it to be a fitting vehicle for the transmission of His Spirit to the many races and peoples of which that great Empire was composed. The leaven therefore was soon at work in many parts of the world : and when at last the great Empire broke up, and what we know as the nations of Christendom were formed, they all possessed it. But, though the power of Christ's Spirit had caused wonderful transformations both in individuals, producing great saints, and in the public opinion of the nations in most respects, it did not even till our own day appear to have done much to overcome national selfishness. The kingdoms of the world did not appear to

[1] S. Luke xxii. 25–29.

have become, or even to have made much progress towards becoming, 'the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.' The old spirit of Empire still persisted. Nation still rose against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The greatness of any nation or empire was still considered to consist chiefly in its power to increase its size or riches, and to bring more and more people under its dominion. Each nation still considered that its highest duty was to seek its own security and expansion—to be for itself. Yet in innumerable individuals and in many societies within these nations the Spirit of Christ was victorious against the old bad spirit. Such a doctrine as that of Free Trade was a significant sign of this. Nevertheless, till the time of the Great War none of us realized as we do now to how great an extent Christ's Spirit had prevailed in the Christian nations in spite of all their great sins. Then it became manifest that one powerful Empire at least had definitely and blatantly repudiated the spirit and teaching of Christ. It proclaimed that the greatness of an Empire did consist in its power to subjugate other nations to its will; that war was good because it enabled the strongest to gain their ends; that Christ's spirit produced weakness not strength. And almost at once nation after nation realized that this meant reversion to type—to the old savage, heathenish type from which Christ had come to deliver our race. And they banded themselves together on the side of Christ to destroy this diabolical spirit, which if it prevailed the world would be no fit place to live in. We cannot be thankful to Germany for having brought about the appalling catastrophe of the war. But we can and ought to thank God with our whole hearts that through that awful convulsion men in general have been enabled to realize as never before what selfishness is—to what a pass the selfishness of all the nations, our own included, had brought the world, and that love, the Divine self-sacrificing love with which God desires to fill us all, is the only force by which mankind can attain to its true life. So truly is this the case that God is able to put before the nations of the earth now a new vision—a new revelation of His purpose for mankind, which we had never

been able to see before. What He said by His Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to the small band of Christ's disciples, that He is saying now to the nations of the world. And as then that little band was inspired to feel that all their powers and possessions were no longer to be used merely for themselves, but for all who had need: so now the nations of the earth, inspired by the same Spirit, have —many of them at any rate already—begun to realize that their powers and possessions are for mankind in general; that the greatness of a nation or an empire is not to be measured by its power to rule over many peoples and acquire vast territories, but solely by the amount of love it exercises—by the extent to which it uses its might for the benefit of weaker nations and of mankind in general. A practical attempt to give effect to this newly-realized truth has been made by the League of Nations, which, whatever we may think of its present constitution (and it is, of course, like all men's first attempts, open to criticism in many respects), surely must be considered one of the most wonderful results of God's incarnation that has as yet appeared on earth. Whatever has to be said of the present imperfection of its organization, its spirit is Christ's. Its ideal is to be not a League of some nations who combine against the rest, as former Leagues have been, but of all the nations of the earth. It aims at nothing less than welding the whole of mankind together in one great Brotherhood—one organized body of which all the parts work for the good of the whole, each contributing what it is specially fitted to contribute to the wealth, material and spiritual, of the whole. That ideal has manifestly come straight from Christ; it is the ideal He proclaimed as God's, and which His first followers were enabled to realize on the small scale of the infant Church with such remarkable perfection that people outside it exclaimed in wonder, as at an entirely new phenomenon, 'See how these Christians love one another.' That this ideal is being accepted as their own by so many nations is a fact which should make us all thank God and take courage. The spiritual significance of the change between the ideals of the Roman Empire in Christ's day and those of

the present League of Nations is beyond the power of the most vivid imaginations among us to appreciate.[1]

But let us not forget how the change has been brought about. It has been effected because a very large number of individuals throughout the Christian ages have been poor in spirit—have so depended on Christ for that love which they had not by nature, that He has been able to fill them with His Spirit and through them gradually to effect the wonderful change we are thinking of in the nations to which they belonged. And only in the same way can the nations who have now accepted the new ideal be enabled to fulfil it, and the nations who as yet have not accepted it be induced to do so.

It is for us all, therefore, to depend on Christ day by day for the power of love which will enable us to use all our powers and possessions as those who have received them in trust for their fellow-men. We need not be afraid that men's powers if they are thus used will become less effective. The exact contrary will be the case. Motives of self-interest are indeed very powerful in us all; but as we obtain from Christ the power to use our powers for others instead of for ourselves, the joy and enthusiasm with which we use them is greatly increased. During the war certain great financiers were invited by the Government to assist them. By their means many millions of pounds were saved. Can we suppose that the brilliant powers of those men were used with less joy and enthusiasm because they were being used for the community as a whole? We are sure that it must have been wholly otherwise. Or, when great singers and other artists put their services at the disposal of the Army that they might help to cheer and hearten the fighting men, we are sure that they used their powers with more enthusiasm than ever. We have abundance of proof that men use their powers best, and that new powers are evoked

[1] Since this was written the Washington Conference, with its already wonderful results, has made our hearts leap with joy and thankfulness. The world is evidently beginning to understand Christ and His principles. International politics have come to stay. The idea is fast gaining ground that the nations of the world are ideally, and that it is the duty of politicians to make them actually, one vast Brotherhood.

from them which they did not know they possessed, when they are inspired by the Spirit of Christ—the spirit of self-sacrificing love. That same experience induces us to hold to the teaching of Christ that to gain His character we must strive to ' abide in ' Him. For though it frequently happens that men and women can, and do at times of special need or excitement, use their powers on behalf of others with great devotion, it is only they who habitually trust to Christ and strive to live with Him who habitually use their powers and possessions not for themselves, but as those who have received them as Stewards of God.

They do not seek the praise of men, because they realize that the praise which is due for any gifts they have or work they do, belongs to God from whom all their power comes.

See S. Matt. vi. 1 ; v. 16 ; *cf. S. John* iii. 27 ; v. 44 ; 1 *Cor.* iv. 7 ; xii. 4–7 ; *Rom.* xii. 6–8.

This does not mean that they do not desire the praise of men, nor take pleasure in it when it comes. We are meant to live as ' members one of another,' and all healthy people whose hearts have not been hardened, do desire the affection and approval of other people, especially of those who are closely associated with them, and of whom they are fond. They cannot help desiring it, and they are right to rejoice in it and thank God for it when it is given to them. We all know how greatly we are encouraged and strengthened in our work when people believe in and think well of us. It has become a proverbial saying among us that it is impossible to help people unless we do believe in them.

Nevertheless, it is never right for us deliberately to work to gain the praise of men. Our powers are given us by God to be used for Him and for our fellow-men, not for our own satisfaction. And those who have at last learned to depend on God and to live in union with Him, gain from Him the power no longer to live for themselves. But the temptations to do so are constant and very subtle. It often disheartens people to feel that they are never free from them. It seems to them sometimes as if their work was spoiled because they are for ever being tempted to seek the praise

of men while they do it. But this is not so. It is inevitable and good that they should be thus tempted. The only people who can be supposed to be free from such temptations are either those who have, by a long course of selfish living, become so hard in heart and cynical that they do not any longer care what men say or think of them ; or people who from false religious motives aim at annihilating their affections, somewhat after the manner of Hindu fakirs. It was in former ages often supposed by Christian mystics or members of enclosed Religious Orders that this was a right aim. They considered that human affections were such dangerous things because they were the occasion of so many temptations, that they ought to be destroyed as far as possible, that God might be more perfectly served ; as though God desired to be served chiefly by men and women who were deliberately destroying the best part of their nature, those affections which are meant to be the main channels in them for the Divine love. This doctrine was based on a false application of our Lord's teaching about self-denial. That teaching is indeed very severe : it proceeds from the love which must at all costs evoke all that is best in us. 'If any man cometh after me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.'[1] 'And if thy hand—if thy foot—cause thee to stumble, cut it off . . . if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out : it is good for thee to enter into life maimed . . . halt, rather than having thy two hands, or thy two feet to go or be cast into Gehenna. It is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna.'[2] This teaching is certainly as uncompromising as it could be. And it is not difficult to understand that people who were eager for the kingdom of God, who, having found the pearl of great price, were ready to sell all that they had to get it, fastened upon it and allowed it to fill their minds to the exclusion of other teaching of our Lord which should have been combined with it. For it is to be taken with His teaching as a whole, given

[1] S. Luke xiv. 26. [2] S. Mark ix. 43–47.

both in word and through the example of His life. When it is thus taken, it remains indeed as uncompromising as before, but its application becomes clear. Our Lord did teach most plainly both by word and example that we are to allow nothing whatever to prevent us from doing God's will as He makes it known to us. There are to be no exceptions. We are to be entirely ruthless with respect to anything that we know is holding us back from following our Lord in any direction. But that does not mean that God wants us to serve Him with a maimed nature. He came that we might have life and have it abundantly, and that our whole nature might be fulfilled with it. If in an extreme case we have brought ourselves by a long course of sin and selfishness to such a pass that we cannot obey God without cutting off some part of our nature, it must be done. It is better to enter into the kingdom of God with a maimed nature than not to enter it at all. But God who made us—our whole nature—for Himself, appeals to us always to give our whole selves to Him, with all our affections intact. Consider the example of His own human life. He never allowed anything to cause His human will to swerve from the path His Father had appointed for Him. He left His mother and His home; He disregarded the wishes of those who loved Him, even His mother's, treating them and her for the time as though they had no claim on Him, when they unknowingly would have dissuaded Him from doing the work His Father had given Him to do. He caused His mother the bitterest grief, the worst agony she could feel, that He might drink the cup His Father had given Him. But there is no sign whatever that He ever withdrew His affection from her or the others whom He especially loved. His whole life shows very plainly that all His human affections were used to the full always, and that His special human ties were altogether precious to Him. He drew all classes of people who were capable of appreciating His affection, to Himself with the cords of a man. And while He was at the disposal of everyone and ready to give His whole heart and attention to each one who had need of Him, He also had special ties—particular loves and friendships.

'Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.' S. John was the disciple 'whom Jesus loved,' i.e. with a special love which was not given in the same way to the rest. He was as far as possible from withdrawing Himself from human ties and interests, as many of His followers in later days thought it right to do. We can understand how greatly mistaken they were and why our Lord's example in this respect is what it is, if we bear in mind His teaching and that of His Apostles about the Church which He is building up. It consists of Himself, the Head, and of all those who have received His glorified human life by a new birth and have thus become members of His Body.[1] And this Body of Christ is an organized body which S. Paul compares in this respect to a human body, in that all its members not only receive Christ's life but are intended to be channels by means of which that life is handed from one to another and flows freely through the Body. But the members are channels for this purpose only so far as they will to be. We can dam up the channels that we are on either side, the Divine or the human. We can allow our minds and hearts to be occupied with our mere human life to such an extent that Christ with His Divine love cannot flow freely into them: then we have more or less choked the channel on the Divine side. Or we can, as many mystics appear to have done, give ourselves so exclusively to seek our own union with Christ, cutting ourselves off from human ties and interests, that His love cannot flow freely through us to the rest of the Body with whom we are in contact: then we are choking the channel on the human side. God's intention is that our minds and hearts should remain always open wide on both sides. Then His love will flow freely into all parts of our nature, and all the affections we have, through which we are able to form ties of many different kinds with our fellow-men, will be filled and transformed by Him. If we apply this to the matter we are considering, it means that we are not to be afraid of the affections which cause us to desire and delight in the love and the praise of others, but are to treat

[1] See, e.g., Ephes. i. 15–23; ii. 19–22; iv. 4–16; Col. ii. 19; cf. S. John xv. 1–5; 1 Cor. xii. 12–27.

them as God's good gifts given for the fulfilment of His eternal purpose. But it means also that we are to strive to live in such close and habitual union with Christ that our affections are filled with His love, so that however greatly we desire the love and approval of others, we desire still more that God's purpose may be accomplished, and that all our affections, which used to be selfishly exercised, may instead be used in God's service and so bring our friends and beloved ones to Him. If this is our aim, then it is good that we should still be beset by temptations to seek the praise of men. For every such temptation which our wills resist becomes a means by which our wills grow stronger—by which we give ourselves in love to God and men more earnestly and effectually.

But let us bear in mind, as in the former cases, that it is only the poor in spirit—those who rely wholly on God for the strength of love they require—who can persevere in such a life as this. Apart from union with Christ, our natures, which have inherited selfish tendencies from countless past generations, are too strong for us, and we shall live chiefly to gain praise or affection for ourselves.

They do not seek high places, for they know that they have no power of their own to fulfil the duties of them. See S. Luke xiv. 7–11. *But they do not shrink from any position or responsibility to which God calls them, for they are sure that He will enable them to do their duty in the place He has assigned to them.*

Those who are poor in spirit, whose character is built upon humility and who are, as our Lord teaches, the only people through whom He can do effectively the work of His kingdom, cannot seek high places for themselves in that kingdom. It is conceivable that people without any lack of humility could seek responsible posts in work which is for this world only, if by reason of special ability or training they knew that they were peculiarly fitted for the posts they sought. For instance, there was many years ago an English professor in one of the Calcutta colleges who was a good and humble-minded man. But his mind was afflicted because

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Calcutta University had no Chair of Indian Archæology, of which he had been a student for many years, and which he considered a subject of special value for the education of Indian students. He therefore wrote to the Viceroy to suggest that such a Chair should be established and that he himself should be put into it as the first professor, on the ground that he was better qualified to teach the subject than anyone else in India, which was probably quite true. If he had known of anyone who was better qualified than himself, he would certainly have suggested him instead. This was no doubt an odd thing for our friend to do (he was a little eccentric), but his action was quite compatible with the fact that his character was that of a good humble-minded Christian who was making the best suggestion he could think of for the better education of Indian students, to whose cause he was devoted.

But it is inconceivable that anyone who is poor in spirit could seek for high place or position involving higher responsibility in the kingdom of heaven. For every such higher place spiritual powers are necessary which no one possesses of himself—powers which, if we have them, we receive as daily gifts from Christ, given in response to our faith and to enable us to fulfil the vocation He has given us. But what if one were to say in his heart, I consider the time has come when I ought to have a higher place than my present one in the Church or in my Community : I will therefore try to get it ? The answer cannot be put too plainly. No one could conceive such a thought and act upon it without very grave and sinful presumption. To do so would be to disregard the whole truth of his relation to God. It would be tantamount to saying not merely, I have now gained so much knowledge and experience of men that I am capable of occupying a wider sphere than my present one, but, I have been so faithful in the stewardship with which Christ has entrusted me hitherto that I ought now to have a higher one ; in other words, I have loved so perfectly hitherto, I have such an accumulation of divine self-sacrificing love in my heart, that I am capable of shepherding a much larger flock : it is right therefore for

me to seek this wider sphere of influence. And so, for instance, a Sister might seek to become a Superior, or a Priest to be a Bishop.

This kind of temptation undoubtedly comes to many good people in very plausible ways. It is therefore well for us to see clearly that to yield to any such temptation is to go by a way which is the exact opposite of the way by which Christ went. He sought to know and to do His Father's will only. He desired nothing for Himself; He did not dare to take any step, or do any work, except when and as His Father gave Him directions. He realized that He had no power except that which came to Him continually from His Father to enable Him to do the daily work which His Father gave Him to do. Accordingly, He tells His disciples, through whom His Father's work is to be carried on in each generation, that they must never seek high places but choose the lowest. 'For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,' that is, everyone who presumes to trust to his own power for work in the kingdom of heaven will come to see that he has trusted to that which does not exist, and that the work, which he began with high hopes but with great presumption, has failed utterly; while, on the other hand, he who trusts wholly to God, as having nothing of himself, can and will be endowed by God with power to fulfil vocations which are ever becoming higher and of more importance for the work of the kingdom of heaven.

Thus we see that poverty of spirit, while it makes it impossible for a man to seek for high place in God's kingdom, enables him to accept without hesitation any new vocation—any call to a post of higher responsibility—as soon as he is sure that God and not merely his own inclination is calling him. It is usually very difficult to discover this. God's calls are sometimes so plain that their source cannot be mistaken, but most people have to pray very earnestly, and to examine themselves very carefully, until they can make a sincere offer of themselves to God to do only what He wishes, before they can know of a certainty whether He is calling them or not. But when once they

are sure that He is, then, if they are poor in spirit, they can make the kind of response that Mary made : ' Behold the slave of the Lord ; be it unto me according unto thy word.' [1] For they who are in the habit of trusting to God wholly for the strength they need, will be sure that all the strength which is necessary for the fulfilment of their new vocation will be put at their disposal by God, however impossible it may have seemed to them beforehand that people such as they could be called to and could fulfil such vocations.

We all need, however, to be constantly on our guard against insincerity with respect to this matter. There is probably more insincere thought, talk, and action concerning ' vocation ' than there is about any other religious subject, so prone are we all to think or pretend that the strong leadings of our own inclinations are calls from God.

There is a typical story which may help to keep us on our guard : that of an ecclesiastic who had at last received an offer of a bishopric for which he and his wife had been longing for years. A friend, hearing of it, called to congratulate him. He was met by the daughter, who said ' I'm afraid I am the only one you can see ; father is in his study praying for light ; mother is upstairs packing.' Who of us can read such a story without being put to shame at the recollection of similar insincerities of our own ? Yet insincerity in this matter must have very grave consequences both for ourselves and for any spiritual work we have presumed to undertake apart from God's call. Our one safeguard is to abide in Christ as those who cannot at any time do any good without Him. Only they who are trying to do this can be sure whether or to what God is calling them, and that He will give them the necessary strength to fulfil His will.

They endeavour to obey the Apostolic precept 'pray without ceasing,' that is, they take whatever opportunities they have for using their minds in direct conscious prayer to God, and they try so to live that their hearts may be habitually lifted up to Him.

[1] S. Luke i. 38. Contrast the response of Moses, Exod. iv. 10–13.

Those who realize that they are wholly dependent on God both for the knowledge of what He wants them to do with their lives and for the power to do it, will of course try to spend as much time with Him as possible. They will eagerly take all opportunities that are offered for conscious communion with Him, and they will try to make as many more opportunities of the kind as they can without neglecting their other duties. The Apostle's exhortation 'pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks' seems to mean much more than 'never give up prayer.' It is an exhortation to a condition of habitual communion with God, and therefore implies the possibility of it for very busy persons, for S. Paul was such a person, as well as for people who are not yet far advanced in spirituality, for such were most of his readers. We can, it is true, only spend a limited time and a limited amount of energy every day in conscious prayer to God. Most of the working time of the lives of most of us ought to be spent in giving our undivided attention to other things or persons. But this does not contradict the fact that we can, if we will, learn to live habitually with and for God, so that our life can be truly described as a condition of unceasing prayer.

We probably all know of someone who can be said to 'live for' someone else almost entirely—a mother, for instance, for her son. This does not mean that she is consciously thinking about him all day long. She may have a very busy life and many things to do which occupy her whole attention while she is doing them. In spite of this she can live for her son—her whole heart can be given to him—he can be the one main object of her life, so that if he was taken away, her life, however busy she was, would be empty.

The 'poor in spirit' strive that their relation to God may resemble this, however busy they are; that He may be the one main object of all they do or attempt, as well as the one source of their inspiration and power.

But our experience goes to show that no one can have his mind occupied with many things, each of which requires his whole attention at the time, and yet live continually

with and for God, unless he tries with all his might to embrace and use whatever opportunities he can get for conscious prayer, that is, unless he ' makes time ' often each day during which he can give his whole attention to God. Our own experience ought to be sufficient to assure each of us that this is so. But in addition to it we have the startling record of Christ's life on earth. It was not sufficient, as we might have supposed it would be, for Him to have spent many years in quiet at Nazareth with His Father before His ministry began. He had to preface that ministry with a forty days' retreat in the wilderness that He might be alone with His Father, and all through it till His death He felt it necessary to set apart special times—often whole nights—for going apart from everyone to pray. If He who never committed any sin, whose human will never swerved from its obedience to God, found this necessary in order that He might remain in union with His Father throughout the busy time of His ministry among men, it will be for us the very height of folly to suppose that in our busy lives we can remain in union with God unless we are taking and making all possible opportunities for conscious prayer—for giving the whole attention of our minds as well as the love of our hearts to God, our ever-present Saviour. But if we are doing this, then, so wonderful is God's response to those who depend wholly upon Him, we can live with and for God, so that whatever we do for others we do for Him deliberately because they are His children, and whatever our work may be we do it deliberately for the extension of His kingdom. And to live thus is to live a life of prayer.

They make the mystery of the Eucharist the centre of their life on earth.

This goes without saying for people who believe what you believe about the Eucharist—that it is for our time on earth the chief means, in comparison with which all others are insignificant, by which God feeds us with His own life. People who are poor in spirit and believe this, will of course try to give all the power of their minds and all the love of their hearts to our Lord as He comes in this sacrament,

that they may enable Him to fulfil in them the purpose for which He comes: 'As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me.'

'*Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*'—because they are seeking it before all else, in accordance with our Lord's injunction 'seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness.'[1] For God, who is Love, must give His Spirit—the life of the kingdom of heaven—to all who by reason of their great desire for God have become capable of receiving Him.

II. MOURNING

It has seemed right to dwell at considerable length on the first Beatitude, because poverty of spirit is, according to our Lord's teaching, the foundation on which the Christian character has to be built up in each of us, and the foundation of such a building should be very carefully laid. The other virtues which go to make up this character need not detain us so long, except perhaps that one which is the crown of the whole.

The Christian character necessarily causes those who possess it to 'mourn' in this life, for it is the character of Him who 'hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows,' 'who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree.'

Hence S. Matt. v. 4, 'Blessed are they that mourn.'

If the first Beatitude startled and disappointed Christ's hearers, the second must have astonished and shocked them even more. Jesus the great prophet had, as they were given to understand, come to found the kingdom to which for centuries their nation had eagerly looked forward: or, as they would no doubt have thought of it, to 'restore,' in far greater grandeur and power than ever, 'the kingdom to Israel.'[2] This was a matter for rejoicing—a wonderful event that was able to evoke the greatest enthusiasm

[1] S. Matt. vi. 33. [2] Acts i. 6.

of which they were capable. Therefore, when the great prophet proceeded to say that the blessed ones—the true citizens of the kingdom—were ' they that mourn,' it must have seemed that he was deliberately trying to damp their enthusiasm—to quench the fiery zeal He had begun to kindle in their hearts.

And this was no doubt at least part of His intention. He who could gauge with accuracy the effect of His words because He ' knew what was in man,' must have deliberately chosen His words to counteract the effect which had been wrought by His announcement ' the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' coupled as it was with the report of His wonderful powers which had already gone forth ' into all Syria.' [1]

The word he used for mourn (Gr. πενθεῖν) is a strong one. It implies a grief which so takes possession of the whole being that it cannot be hid.[2] Strong language was required to correct the presuppositions in the minds of His hearers. Their ideas of the kingdom and kingship were of this world. The idea of a king which prevailed then not only in Israel but everywhere was, as we were thinking, that of one who ruled over his subjects, exacting service and tribute from them. A kingdom was considered more or less great according as its king thus ruled over the inhabitants of a larger or smaller territory. The ideal of a king that was in Christ's mind was of an opposite kind : that of One who reigns by the force of Divine love only, who serves instead of dominating His people, His kingdom consisting of those in whose hearts He, the King of love, reigns and thus makes them like Himself.

This explains our Lord's language : it shows why He taught that the true citizens of His kingdom must of necessity ' mourn ' in this life. It is not that God desires mourning. When His will is fulfilled in all His rational creatures, there will be no more of it. The perfect condition for which He is always working, is thus described : ' He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes ; and death shall be no

[1] S. Matt. iv. 17–24.

[2] See Trench, *Synonyms of New Testament*; cf. S. Mark xvi. 10 ; Gen. xxxvii. 34 ; Rev. xviii. 15.

more ; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more : the first things are passed away.'[1] But in this life, and indeed in the next so long as sin and its dreadful consequences remain, those who are true citizens of Christ's kingdom must of necessity mourn because they love God and their fellow-men.

There are, or appear to be, many people who go through this life in a light-hearted way, trying to get as much enjoyment out of it as they can, and therefore ignoring as far as possible the dark side of it, the sin and suffering of their fellow-men. But these are not the people who love, who possess Christ's character, who are of the kingdom of heaven. They are for themselves. Those in whom love reigns, that love that ' seeketh not its own ' but the good of others, cannot desire to ignore the sin and suffering in the world. On the contrary, the more love takes hold of them, the more they see and feel what is wrong, the more profoundly are they affected by the ills which affect mankind. Therefore, Jesus was and is of necessity ' the man of sorrows.' Because His human soul was filled with the Divine love, He suffered on earth far beyond what is possible for any other human being, on account of the sins of the world and their consequences. We remember how He tried to explain this to His two disciples—that it ' behoved the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory.' He ' interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself ' —all that the prophets of Israel had spoken concerning the sufferings of God on account of the sins and unfaithfulness of His people—which if they had been less ' slow of heart ' would have enabled them to understand that God's own chosen Representative, His anointed One, must when He came be pre-eminently a sufferer.[2] The author of ' Hebrews ' understood it. ' It became him,' he says, ' for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.' [3]

This Beatitude, therefore, is no panegyric on mourning, but a promise of ' comfort ' (*παράκλησις*) to those who

[1] Rev. xxi. 4. [2] S. Luke xxiv. 25–27. [3] Heb. ii. 10.

because they belong to Christ do of necessity mourn. It says in effect 'blessed are those who, living in a world in which they are surrounded by sin and suffering, give themselves in love.' For mourning in Christ's sense is nothing else but love in relation to those who sin and suffer.

The mourning of those who possess Christ's character is a brave and patient bearing with Him of the burden of sin and sorrow which is in the world, with a view to its removal.

See, e.g., Phil. iii. 10 ; Col. i. 24 ; 1 S. Peter iv. 12, 13 ; Acts v. 41 ; 1 Cor. v. 2.

The mourning of which Christ speaks, since it is always the outcome of love, produces activity on behalf of those for whom we mourn. It is quite distinct from the sadness or melancholy which results from dwelling upon evil, and which is often produced even in good people by the spectacle of the evils of the world. Such sadness tends to make matters worse, whereas the mourning which proceeds from love has always a healing force.

Our Lord bore the sins of men and carried their sorrows that they might be done away. He who realized the heinousness of sin as no sinner can realize it, became the perfect penitent for mankind. That is, He fought against and conquered sin by overcoming in His flesh all the temptations that could be brought against Him ; by feeling the full force of sin and crushing it completely by His human will. The result was that His human nature, wholly victorious in itself over all sin and evil, became the perfect vehicle through which the Divine power can enter the human race and be poured into all parts of it, till all men have received it and by means of it have won their own complete victory. This power of Divine love we are continually receiving, and God asks us to make it our own, and with it fight against the sin and evil with which we come in contact in ourselves or in others, until it is overcome. As we and all others who are united to Him respond to His call, the fruits of His victory increase in the race. This process is to go on till the whole race shares in His victory, and sin and sorrow are no more. This difficult subject will perhaps become clearer

if we go on to consider in some detail what Christian mourning is, and what it effects.

Christ's disciples must mourn for their own sins because they injure God and their fellow-men. Such mourning is a necessary part of the penitence on account of which their sins can be blotted out.

It is often said that people in these days do not worry about their sins, and it is implied that this is the desirable condition for us and that mourning for our sins is a mistake. In view of this, it is necessary to point out, what will be obvious to most of us when it is pointed out, that anyone who loves God and his fellow-men must mourn for the sins he has committed against them, when he realizes that he has committed them and at any rate some part of the truth about the harm they have done. If I realize that my careless or uncharitable talk has greatly injured the reputation of a good friend of mine, and I go on in a light-hearted manner as if it did not matter much, I am a callous-hearted man, I do not love; if I do love I must of necessity be sorry and try hard to undo the harm I have done. Much more is this the case when I realize that I have sinned against the good God and have injured His cause by sinning.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there is much excuse for such remarks as the above. They are caused no doubt by the frequent spectacle of the false sorrow of which we have spoken. Much spurious penitence is manifested among Christians, which ought to be shown up and condemned. It is not uncommon to find people with sensitive consciences brooding over their past sins until they lose heart and perhaps almost despair of being forgiven. To do this is to add evil to evil. They have wasted their spiritual substance by sinning in the past, and now they go on to waste more of it in vain regrets. They spend the force, which God gives them for rising out of their sins into a higher life of service, in melancholy brooding on themselves as they used to be or as they might have been if they had not sinned. This kind of mourning is often mistaken for true penitence, but it is altogether

bad: it proceeds from self-love only. It is not surprising that the sight of it often causes people to be suspicious of all mourning for sins, and leads to a misunderstanding of Christ's words.

True mourning, which we feel of necessity if we love, leads us to wake up and set to work with all our might to unite ourselves more closely with our Lord, so that the sins we have done may not be repeated, and the harm that was caused by them may be as far as possible undone.

There is something else to be added. Many people who are otherwise good and loving do not mourn although they go on sinning, because they do not realize that they are sinning. They do not take any pains to find out what their lives are like in the sight of God, and therefore the self-will and self-love to which we are inclined by nature, and to which we are constantly being tempted from outside, overcomes them and spoils their lives to an extent which would appal them if they were aware of it. Self-examination, careful and systematic, is a necessity for those who would possess Christ's character. 'Blessed are they that mourn' can be said to have for a corollary 'Blessed are they who take the trouble to find out the causes for mourning which exist in themselves.' It is remarkable that the latest development of psychology—psycho-analysis—urges the necessity of self-examination as forcibly as the Church of Christ has for centuries insisted on it, that the diseases of our souls may be healed and we may take our allotted share in man's struggle. But it should be done only at stated times, lest the tendency which is in us all to think too much about ourselves should be increased. If, e.g., for a very short time when we say our night prayers, we ask God to show us what we have done wrong in the day and try to recall and make a note of it, and if at certain times in the year we make a detailed confession of the sins we have noted down, then we can leave ourselves alone for the rest of our lives, trusting to God to show us in response to the systematic pains we have taken, what we can bear to know of our own sinfulness. Then we shall mourn as we ought for our own sins. That means we shall know in what

directions we are specially liable to swerve from the way of righteousness, and therefore our need of special help from Christ; our longings to serve Him and not to hinder His cause as we have hindered it, will increase; we shall be 'comforted,' strengthened, as fellow-workers with Him in His struggle against the sin and suffering of mankind.

Christ's true disciples mourn with Him for the sins of others also. Such mourning is a spiritual force exerted for the deliverance of the sinners for whose sins they mourn. See *Gal.* vi. 2; *Col.* i. 24.

Most of what has been said about mourning for our own sins applies equally here. As it is possible to live without thinking about our own sins, so we can, if we will, disregard the sins of others and make no attempt to bear them with Christ. But we cannot do this if we love, if Christ reigns in our hearts. Those who love with Christ's love must mourn for the sins of others because those sins are injuring God, spoiling the lives of men and women, introducing confusion and woe into the kingdom of God on earth, and preventing its increase. Such mourning does not mean allowing oneself to be overcome and dispirited by the sins of the world, but it is a brave and patient bearing with Christ the burden of sins, that they may be done away. It is an outpouring of love for God and for sinners: it is a spiritual force capable of producing repentance in the hearts of sinners on account of which their sins can be blotted out.

You have had much experience which shows you that this is true. People come to you here who have sinned deeply. Many of them have been immersed in impurity. Your hearts go out to them because Christ's love is in you. You are not repelled by them, but you mourn because you hate the sins which have defiled them, and because you love God and the sinners.

That mourning of yours is a strong force of love which goes out from you and enters into them—of love which causes you to long for their repentance and salvation. In time it penetrates their hearts, with the result that they, who were perhaps at first callous and unrepentant, begin to be sorry

for their sins and to desire to be good. You have been a link between Christ and them. Through you His love has at last reached them who without such a link would probably never in this life have known of its existence.

And this is but one example of the way in which our Lord is sending His disciples to sinners all over the world, that through those who are united to Him He may come in contact with those who are not. Blessed therefore are you and all other disciples of His who 'mourn' for the sins of others—both of those with whom they are in physical contact and of those with whom they can bring themselves into union by prayer. 'They shall be comforted, or strengthened,' said our Lord. And they require much strengthening. For the bearing of others' sins costs a great deal. It frequently means being beset by appalling temptations—those of sinners who cannot yet bear their own. It may often be to us as though we ourselves had committed the sins we mourn for, and are almost overwhelmed by the weight of woe which has come upon us. In a word, it means bearing as much as God sees we are able to bear of what Christ bore in Gethsemane when He cried 'O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me!' This is the most fruitful of all the ways in which we can, if we will, 'fill up on our part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ.'[1]

Christ's true disciples mourn for, and thus help to bear, the sorrows and pain and calamities of other people.

This is but an extension of the mourning for the sins of others, of which we have been thinking; for all the sorrows and calamities in the world are the result of the sins of God's rational creatures. Those who sin and those who suffer are not, however, necessarily the same people. The righteous frequently suffer more than the wicked. Indeed, the holiest people are they who suffer more than any others from the results of sin, our Lord Himself being by far the greatest sufferer of all. The sufferings of the righteous have been for ages a perplexing problem to men. The author of

[1] See pp. 63, 64, 65.

the Book of Job was one of the earliest writers we know of who faced it. Hitherto it had been generally supposed, as it was by Job's friends, that a man's sufferings were always the direct and deserved result of his own sins. We see now that in innumerable cases this is not so. Yet the sufferings of good people, which are often much greater than those of the wicked, are still a puzzle to men, till they have come to realize the value and the effects of the voluntary bearing of sorrows, either one's own or those of others. This is the subject which is before us now : not the mourning for or bearing of sorrows which we have to endure whether we wish to or not (that is quite another subject which we shall consider later on), but the mourning for the calamities of other people which is voluntarily undertaken by loving people—people in whom Christ reigns. He, fulfilling the ancient prophecy,[1] 'hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.' He does so still and must continue to do so till they cease to be. And those in whose hearts He reigns must of necessity do the same.

But the question can be asked, What is the use of this ? Is not this voluntary bearing of others' sorrows merely adding to the sum of the world's pain ? We no longer suppose that suffering in itself has an expiatory value ; that God exacts so much suffering for so much sin, and is willing to remit the sin if the full payment in suffering has been made, whether sinners pay it themselves or another pays it for them. We see now that such doctrines are incompatible with the truth that God is love, and arose from a distorted view of the nature of Christ's Atonement. What answer can we then give ? We can best arrive at an answer by consulting our own experience of what actually happens when people voluntarily and lovingly bear the pains and calamities of others. You have had a large amount of such experience in this Sisterhood. There are many people who thankfully acknowledge that their sorrows or pains have been considerably lessened, if not wholly taken away, by your sympathy, and that at the same time a new love has been kindled in their hearts. This at any rate we can

[1] Is. liii. 3, 4.

account for. You, constrained by the love of Christ which flows in your hearts, have borne their griefs—felt them as if they were your own,—and in doing so have created a new link between the sufferers and Christ's Spirit, the Spirit of God, the author and giver of all love. We are then looking at one aspect of the truth which it is the main purport of this book to proclaim, that love (*ἀγάπη*), the spending of one's self for the welfare of others, is the destruction of all evil and the source, the essence, of all good. Mourning for others' calamities is simply loving—giving one's self for—them so long as they are in a condition of suffering. And that love thus given tends directly, not only to turn their sorrow into joy, but also to transform *them* into the likeness of Christ. This is now no uncommon experience in the world. Who of us has not felt that his own sorrow or physical pain has been lightened or turned into joy by someone who loved him enough to bear his sorrow or pain with and for him ? We have all had that happy experience which brought with it the knowledge that a new and transforming force had been transmitted to us from those who had given us their sympathy—a force of love that kindled in us the desire to give love in return, or was perhaps no less than the sudden opening of new life to us.

This rapidly growing mass of experience enables us to understand how Christ has brought and ever brings salvation to mankind by bearing their pains and sorrows. It enables us also to see why He desires to send His disciples into all parts of the world to mourn for, or bear, the calamities of others ; why He is calling *us* to fill up on our part, so far as He gives us power and opportunity, His own afflictions.

Enough has now been said perhaps in explanation of the mourning upon which Christ has pronounced a benediction. But it may make for clearness if we close this discussion of it by a short exposition of the difficult words of S. Paul which have been several times quoted, for they point us in a singularly forcible and even startling manner to the truth about the share that Christ's disciples can have with Him in the work of man's salvation. ' Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and fill up on my part that which

is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church.'[1]

How are these words to be reconciled with the truth that there is 'one mediator between God and men, (himself) man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all,'[2] 'who,' as our Liturgy, following the teaching of the New Testament, states, 'made there (i.e. on the Cross) by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world'? In what sense can it be said that there is anything 'lacking of the afflictions of Christ'? Such questions have often been provoked by S. Paul's words, which have appeared so difficult to many that they have supposed the word for 'fill up' or 'supplement' (*ἀνταναπληρῶ*) or the word for 'that which is lacking' (*τὰ ὑστερήματα*) could not have been used in their proper sense. But there is no need for such a dangerous supposition. There are two distinct teachings in the New Testament, each of which supplements and does not contradict the other, (1) that Christ 'gave Himself a ransom for all'; that His sacrifice was complete and His work 'finished' when He died; (2) that His work of bringing men to God (which He had always been doing since man's creation) only began to be done in the most effective way after His Resurrection and Ascension. Hence His call to His disciples to go into all parts of the earth and gather in the fruits of His victory: to make actual in the peoples of the earth what He had made possible for all mankind by His own sacrifice. Is not this the solution of the difficulty? He first redeemed mankind by His own perfect obedience to God which culminated on the Cross. He created a new human nature, which is a perfect medium through which God can pour His life into all the members of the human race. But they had not received the life of His new humanity when Christ died. The work by which they were to receive it and make it their own, one by one, is done by Christ's disciples, the members of the Church

[1] Col. i. 24.

[2] 1 Tim. ii. 5–6; cf. Gal. i. 4; Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. i. 18–21; S. Matt. xx. 28, etc.

which is His Body, in every age. It is done through their sacrifices. Christ's humanity is gradually growing towards its perfection through the efforts of those who possess the new power of love which He won for all men by the sacrifice which He offered once for all. And their efforts are costly. They involve much suffering, much 'mourning,' the taking up of His cross, the self-sacrifice of those who, like Him, spend themselves 'to seek and to save that which was lost.' This is why Christ is calling you and me perpetually to bear the burden of sin and suffering with Him.

But, one may say, how am I to do it; what part of the burden am I to bear, and what is exactly meant by bearing it, by 'mourning'? We can answer: There is no need for anxiety on this score; you have only to live with Christ in close friendship, to be 'poor in spirit,' to trust to our Lord for wisdom to know His will and for strength to do it, and at the same time to keep your mind and heart open towards your fellow-men, to keep in touch with those who are nearest to you and with the chief events that the daily newspaper records. Then our Lord Himself will be able to fulfil His desire to make you His fellow-worker in respect of those works which you are best fitted to carry out for Him. *He* will lay on you your burden, often in unexpected ways. He will make known to you through your daily experiences, towards whom, amid the multitude of people you are in contact with, your outpourings of love are to be specially directed and in what ways. The one question He asks of us all in this connection is, Are you willing to drink the cup that I drink, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?

III. MEEKNESS

Meekness is an essential element in the Christian character. 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.' S. Matt. v. 5; cf. xi. 29.

The word 'meek' has been spoiled for most Englishmen by ill-usage. It has, in fact, been so badly treated that it is

scarcely recognizable now as the equivalent of the word our Lord used (in Greek, πραΰς). One serious consequence of this is, that the beautiful virtue of meekness has been discredited, and is commonly considered a manifestation of weakness rather than strength. A meek man usually denotes a weak man, whose 'spirit,' if he had any, has been crushed through his contact with stronger people; one who, if he is married, is a henpecked husband and as such is either laughed at or despised; a man with weak eyes and a receding chin, who is of very little account in the upward struggle of humanity. The meek are in the popular estimation, therefore, by no means to be accounted 'blessed,' and that they will 'inherit the earth' is the last thing that is expected of them. Mark Twain was considered to have made a very good joke when he said that if we want to understand what meekness is, we must look at the chief characteristic of the British race, for they inherit more of the earth than any other race does.

This being so, a considerable effort is required to recover the meaning of the word our Lord used, and to understand why He said the meek were 'blessed, for they shall inherit the earth.'

The word for 'meekness' (πραότης) was used by the Greeks before Christ came, to express a virtue which appeared to them admirable. It meant to them the mean in the matter of anger between the two extremes of passionate anger and impassiveness, with, however, a strong bias towards the latter. It was considered worthy of praise, because by it a man could retain his composure and equanimity in the face of what would otherwise have caused him to break out into anger. It was the virtue of one who was too proud, who felt himself to be of too much consequence, to be ruffled by what would have caused a smaller man to be disturbed and angry.[1] It therefore somewhat resembled, though in an important respect it differed from, the 'meekness' which is produced by Hinduism. The latter arises from that indifference to everything, good or bad, pleasant or annoying, true or false, which is the ideal set up by

[1] Arist., *Ethic. Nic.* iv. 5. See Trench's *Synonyms of N.T.*

Hinduism. It is a result not of pride but of lack of feeling, and therefore, in the Christian sense, not a moral virtue at all, though Hindu ascetics would claim with some show of reason that it is a high virtue, which has been produced by a strenuous and long-continued effort of will. It has cost this, it is true ; though, alas ! the effort of will has been put forth to gain death rather than life, an absence of all effort rather than the fullness of virtue.

Christ raised the word and what it stands for to an entirely new level. His own ' meekness ' and that which He seeks to produce in His disciples does not arise from pride or from lack of feeling, is not a passive but an active virtue which requires the whole force of the will of a loving person. It is, in fact, an essential element in the one all-embracing virtue of love.

Meekness, which is exercised chiefly towards God, is a temper of spirit by which we accept God's dealings with us as good, when they are difficult to bear, or even to understand. It issues out of ' poverty of spirit,' and is closely linked in the New Testament with ' lowliness' (*ταπεινοφροσύνη*).

S. Matt. xi. 29 ; Ephes. iv. 2 ; Col. iii. 12.

Meekness is an exercise of love towards God in times of adversity or trial, which tend to make the exercise an unusually difficult matter. It is therefore in opposition to, and by no means to be confounded with, that temper of spirit which makes us lie down under adversity, or give up struggling against difficulties, because they seem beyond our power to bear, or from a sense that nothing matters much, or that things ' can't be helped.' That is cowardice which results from want of love. Christian meekness is the virtue by which we bear with a strong effort of will what is annoying or difficult or painful or disastrous, without disputing or resisting, but rather with an eager desire to co-operate with God, who has allowed it to fall on us and who asks us to unite with Him to bring good out of it.

It has for its foundation ' poverty of spirit.' For they who live in entire dependence on God do not claim rights for themselves or consider that they are unjustly treated

when adversity falls on them, but as sons of the Divine Father, members of the perfect Son, they bear up against it and do their best with it lovingly and without repining. They, moreover, who ' mourn ' for their sins, and are therefore conscious that their own ill-deserts cannot be equalled by any ills that fall on them from without, are the better able to bear with meekness whatever happens to make life harder for them than it was before.

Let us take an extreme case which illustrates vividly the nature and exercise of meekness. Imagine a mother walking along a road with her only child whom she loves devotedly. The child runs on in front of her, and suddenly a motor-car, which is being driven much too fast, appears round the corner where the child is. The child, startled out of his wits, runs in the wrong direction, and the car, which can only be stopped about three seconds too late, runs over and kills him before his mother's eyes. The mother may at first be so stunned in all her faculties by this disaster that she feels nothing—is in the condition to which Hindu ascetics strive to attain. That of course is not a virtuous condition, but one of semi-death. Let us think of her when she comes to herself and regains the use of her faculties. Her mental and spiritual condition then depends on what her character is. Suppose that she has hitherto been living chiefly for herself, and that her love for her child is very little higher than the passionate affection of animals for their young. She will, in that case, certainly be overcome by this terrible thing that has happened. She will probably rage inwardly if not outwardly against the driver of the car for going at that unlawful pace ; her anger will also, no doubt, be directed against God who allowed such a thing to happen. She will perhaps ' lose her faith ' and renounce God henceforth, and will continue to dwell upon the dreadful disaster that has befallen *herself*, with the worst results for her already selfish character. But suppose that her character is of the opposite kind—that she is a loving woman who has hitherto been living in union with our Lord. Then she will bear the blow with ' meekness.' Though she feels it deeply in proportion to the strength of the love that is in her heart, yet she will

not be overcome by it. She will, on the other hand, manifest surprising strength in face of it—virtue by which she accepts what has happened and tries to evoke good out of it. It may be that she cannot at all understand why it has happened: yet she can believe that some day she will understand it, for she knows that the ways of God, who is love, are such as loving people can understand and would understand at once if the whole case was before them. She realizes that here and now she can only see a very small part of the whole, and can believe that God could not have prevented her child's death without causing more harm still or making impossible some good for mankind, including herself and her child, which was well worth purchasing at such a price. Moreover, because she is poor in spirit, she sees that she could never deserve to have her child given to her at all. As it is, he is her child and will be hers for ever; and if, for some reason which she does not at present understand, she has for a time been deprived of his visible presence, that is not a grievance on account of which she can complain against God. And further, because she is in the habit of 'mourning' for her sins, she cannot consider herself an ideal instrument for the training of her child, and can well believe that he will be trained and that his character will be developed and made Christlike better where he is than if he had stayed with her. Thus she will not be overcome by this disaster, but will overcome it through her faith and love, though the struggle to do so may be a long and painful one. And, having overcome it, she will be a nobler and more Christlike woman than she was before it happened, and of far more use to others who are in danger of being overcome by similar sorrows.

The above imaginary case is typical of many thousands of similar ones which have been within our knowledge since the Great War began. They all show that the 'meekness' by which great sorrows can be overcome is a very strong virtue—the exact opposite of the weakness of those who allow disasters to overcome them. Such meekness means the following of Christ along a very difficult road, and is a beautiful and inspiring manifestation of His character—

of the strength of His love in face of all that is most difficult for human nature to bear.

But there is more to be said if this virtue is to be fully described.

Meekness is therefore also meekness towards men, even evil men, who cause adversity : it is a strong force making for the triumph of good over evil.

See 1 S. Peter ii. 19–24 ; iii. 9–12 ; Jas. i. 19–21 ; Rom. xii. 19–21 ; S. Matt. v. 21–26, 38–48.

The idea which used to prevail all over the world, and does prevail still in those who are not under Christ's influence, is that it is right to resent injuries which are done or caused by our fellow-men, and to try to get satisfaction from them, to take vengeance on them in some way : that it is a sign of weakness not to do so. This idea is only being abandoned very slowly even now. The 'old man' within us so greatly desires satisfaction for injuries received that it is difficult for any of us to give up trying to get it. We try to persuade ourselves that there are many cases in which it is right to get it : many cases in which meekness is not desirable. Meekness we rightly understand to imply the suppression of the emotion of anger. And if the question is asked, Is it always right to suppress it ? most people answer, Certainly not : there are many occasions when it is right to give vent to anger, when it would be wrong not to do so. They rely on the phrase 'righteous indignation,' which is commonly supposed to be a highly desirable emotion. They point to expressions in the Bible, in the New Testament as well as the Old, such as 'the wrath of the Lamb,' 'vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord,' and in general to the severe teaching which is to be found in both Testaments concerning the 'wrath of God' and its consequences for wilful, impenitent sinners. The question we have to consider is whether this teaching makes it right for us to give vent to the anger we feel on any, and if so on what kinds of, occasions. Because the matter is of grave importance, let us consider it carefully and at some length. We all greatly need whatever help we can get

from the Bible, and especially from the teaching and example of our Lord, for dealing rightly with our anger. In the first place it is necessary to be clear as to what we mean by 'anger.' Its original meaning was grief, sorrow; but that has passed out of use, and in accordance with the sense we always attach to the word now in common speech, we may describe anger as an emotion of the mind excited by some injury, real or supposed, that has been done to ourselves or to others, the essence of which emotion is a desire that some retribution may fall on the person who has caused the injury. This is the sense in which the word 'anger' will be used in this discussion, and we shall use it only in its relation to persons, which is its proper use. (It is possible to feel anger against things, as, e.g., when a friend of mine, while he was learning to ride one of the old high bicycles, fell off it so often and hurt himself so much that he said he could sometimes scarcely restrain himself from kicking the machine to pieces. But that was because he unconsciously regarded the thing as though it were a person.) Our question then resolves itself into this: Are there any occasions in which it is right for us to desire such retaliation on persons, or should this emotion of anger always be suppressed?

If we study the teaching of the New Testament from this point of view, it does not appear to afford us any warrant for giving vent to anger on anyone, however great may be the injuries he has inflicted; though it must be confessed that a cursory reading of some parts of it might lead us to the opposite conclusion. The record of the revelation of God's character in Christ, taken as a whole, shows that His 'wrath' means His hatred of sin and its consequences, on account of which His whole Being—His Spirit—is in action that all sin may be done away. He does indeed use all possible means for the destruction of sin, i.e. for turning the hearts of sinners from sin to holiness, and among these are punishments of various kinds. It is part of the eternal law of His Being that sin itself should result in punishment: that the refusal of good should result in the loss of good, the refusal of life in partial or total loss of life. And He points us again and again to this truth, to warn sinners from sin.

But this is altogether different from saying that He desires retribution, or any kind of vengeance on sinners for its own sake—in other words, from saying that He ever gives way to anger in the sense in which we use the word, or ever desires us to do so. 'Vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord.' What is His 'vengeance': in what way does He 'repay'? S. Paul's answer is 'God commendeth his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'; 'while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son'[1]; and in this answer he sums up the Gospel which is proclaimed all through the New Testament. That is the good news, that God our Father, who because He with His whole Being hates sin and all the injuries it causes to mankind, is wholly and always giving Himself for and to the sinners; that He never can desire anything but their good, however much they injure Him and His people; that it is wholly contrary to His Nature to have any desire to take vengeance on them in our sense of the word, or to feel satisfaction because they suffer. 'The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost'[2]: 'go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice; for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'[3] There are no exceptions. God's revealed attitude towards all sinners is the same, that of one who seeks to save them at any cost to Himself. Such teaching as that of S. Luke xv. is decisive as to this. Yet we are slow of heart to believe in the revelation of God's Nature which has been made to us in Christ. We ourselves so often desire vengeance of some kind on sinners that we can scarcely believe that God never does. Yet as a rule we are not aware that our desire for retaliation is as strong as it is, nor to what extent it determines our conception of God's character. It may help us if we examine an extreme instance, in which it would certainly be right to give vent to anger if it is ever right. One such is given in Dr. Dale's book on the Atonement. He cites with great fervour a case of appalling iniquity, and by means of it professes

[1] Rom. v. 8–10. [2] S. Luke xix. 10.
[3] S. Matt. ix. 13; cf. 1 Tim. i. 15.

to prove that it is often a righteous act to give vent to anger —even passionate anger against sinners. If on examination we decide that he is mistaken, it will be practically impossible for us to find any case in which anger is right, and meekness is out of place. This is the case he takes, described in his own words : ' You have a child who is the light and joy of your home ; her voice is sweeter to you than any music, and her face is fairer and brighter than a summer's morning. Her thoughts are as pure as mountain air ; her life is as stainless as mountain snow. She is on the threshold of womanhood, and the very flower and perfection of her loveliness and beauty have come. And a wretch, whose crime human language has no terms black enough to describe, and human laws no punishment terrible enough to avenge—deliberately, by hypocrisy, by lying, by a deep-laid scheme, worked out with elaborate cruelty—betrays her trust, ruins her virtue, and then flings her from him on to the streets of a strange city. He has no compunction for his crime. If the opportunity comes to him again he will repeat it. Tell me now—what ought to be God's relation to such a man as that ? Ought God to be at peace with him ? God forbid ! If He were, there would be no justice in the universe. My hope and strength and consolation in the presence of such a crime as this, come from the certainty that wherever that man goes, under whatever disguises he may live, whatever his wealth may be, whatever his rank, he is pursued by One who is the relentless enemy of his sin—and who will be *his* relentless enemy if he will not renounce his sin—an enemy from whose grasp he cannot escape, whose strength he cannot resist, and whose justice and wrath, if he does not repent, will inflict upon him an awful penalty.'

Now we should all at once agree that such a crime ought to evoke from us the deepest grief, the utmost hatred of, or wrath at the sin, and that our grief and hatred will be real and deep according to the depth of our love for God and men. We shall agree also that we can scarcely conceive a punishment which would be greater than the man deserves who committed that sin. We should all probably find that

our minds were filled with anger as soon as we heard of the crime, and therefore with an intense desire that the sinner should get the punishment he deserves. We should perhaps greatly desire to inflict some of it on him ourselves. Some of us would involuntarily clench our fists, others would pant with indignation; some would get red in the face, others would get white and feel as if they were being suffocated. Whatever its manifestations were, the emotion of anger would be very strong in all whose hearts had not grown cold or callous. But the question to be decided is, how we ought to deal with this strong emotion. We can either give vent to it, as we greatly desire to do, or suppress it, and we must do one or the other. It is far too strong an emotion to be disregarded. Which ought we to do?

Dr. Dale says we ought to give vent to it, to cherish it, to keep it like a volcano in a perpetual state of eruption. The last part of the passage which I have quoted makes this plain, 'My hope and strength and consolation in the presence of such a crime as this, come from the certainty that wherever that man goes . . . he is pursued by One who . . . will be *his* relentless enemy if he will not renounce his sin—an enemy from whose grasp he cannot escape, whose strength he cannot resist, and whose justice and wrath, if he does not repent, will inflict on him an awful penalty.' That is, Dr. Dale gains 'hope and strength and consolation' from the certainty that, if the man does not repent, i.e. when punishment can be no longer of any use for his salvation, God will be his relentless enemy, whose 'justice and wrath' will take vengeance on him in some awful way. What can be said by way of comment except that Dr. Dale was then giving way very badly to anger, and was seeking a dreadful satisfaction for the desire for vengeance which, as we said, the emotion of anger essentially implies? Perhaps the case of the girl was not an imaginary one, but that of one whom Dr. Dale greatly loved. If so, we might say that there was a great deal of excuse for his giving way to anger; but we could not say that he was following Christ in doing so. His relation to that sinner is almost as different from God's relation to him as it could be. Our hope and

strength and consolation in presence of such a crime ought to be derived from the certainty that the sinner is being pursued always by One who loves him with His whole heart ; who is indeed ' the relentless enemy of his sin,' but who on that account has only one desire for him—that he may be saved from his sin ; who for his salvation will inflict on him any kind of punishment that may help him to repent, and will Himself bear a far greater punishment for his sin than any which the sinner is capable of bearing ; whose love for him is indeed so perfect and unchanging that we cannot imagine that even such a sinner as he is can resist it for ever.

When we consider such a case as this, slowly and carefully in the light of the revelation of God in Christ, then such a sinner is seen to be one of the many whom He came to save, for whom and to whom He gave and gives Himself perpetually. It surely becomes impossible to suppose that His grief at and hatred of the man's sin can be in any way appeased by knowing that the man is suffering an awful punishment which can only have the effect (for this is the case Dr. Dale described) of making him a worse man than ever. In other words, it becomes impossible to suppose, does it not, that God can ever act on account of ' anger,' in our sense of the word, against any sinner, however bad. God is love ; and all His actions are those of love ; and it is no part of love to desire to get satisfaction *for oneself* from the punishment of him who has done one an injury. That is the simple truth, which nothing can contradict. We may say, as is often said, that God's justice requires the punishment of the sinner, whether it is likely to help him to repent or not. That is tantamount to saying that God's justice is distinct from His love, and indeed a contradiction of it. But God *is* love, and therefore His justice is but an aspect of His love ; it is His love in relation to goodness, considered as such, and is nothing else but His desire that goodness may triumph universally. His is not the falsely so-called justice of the law courts, which requires so much punishment for so much crime. ' In the course of justice (of that kind) none of us should see salvation.' If we had received the punishment our sins have deserved,

we should, most of us, be hardened sinners by this time and in hell, instead of in the sunshine of God's presence and with the belief in our hearts that God will continue to use us for His service—the service which is perfect freedom—in spite of all the sins we have done. The nations of the world are beginning to see that our old notions of justice are wrong and should be abandoned in our dealings with sinners; and that 'meekness' rather than 'anger' should characterize those who have to deal with breaches of the law, i.e. that they should aim at inflicting punishments which are reformatory rather than vindictive. They are beginning to see, in fact, that the true sense of justice in us, as in God, is the desire not for retaliation, but for the establishment and increase of goodness and love.

The conclusion towards which all this points is that it is never right for us to give way to 'anger'; that it is an emotion which leads to evil, and therefore should always be suppressed. 'Be ye angry and sin not,' says the Apostle.[1] He knew that we often should be angry, as he was himself, and he exhorts us not to give way to anger, to refuse to be led into sin by it or to give the devil the opportunity he wants. That we may be clear as to our duty in this respect, it is well to repeat that we must be sure about the meaning we attach to the word 'anger.' There is an emotion which the sight of sin and cruelty ought to cause in us, and which is often called anger, and which everyone whose love is strong must feel. But that is anger in its old sense of grief, anguish or indignation which does not necessarily include resentment against the sinner, or any purpose of revenge. The 'anger' we are speaking of is directed against sinners, or those who have caused injuries, and its essence is the desire for vengeance. But the former, which is a good emotion, is always liable to develop into the latter, which is a bad one. 'Let all bitterness and wrath and anger (ὀργὴ) be put away from you, with all malice,' said S. Paul, who had just implied that it was possible to be angry (ὀργίζεσθε) without sinning.[2]

[1] Ephes. iv. 26.

[2] Ephes. iv. 31. He uses the word in its two different senses in the same passage.

Our conclusion therefore, more fully expressed, is that the effects of sin, i.e. selfishness, especially if they are glaring ones like the one cited by Dr. Dale, ought to produce in us a very strong emotion, which can be called by various names, such as grief, wrath, indignation, horror, or dismay. But this emotion should always stir us to seek a remedy for the evil, and the repentance of him who is responsible for it; and should never in any case be allowed to degenerate into 'anger,' i.e. into a desire for revenge on him. For thus the evil evokes love from us—the only force which can destroy the evil—instead of self-love, which makes it worse.

This conclusion can be tested by an examination and analysis of the anger that we ourselves feel against people, or have felt. Does it not always include, even if it does not wholly consist of, the desire that they should suffer in some way? And if we analyse this desire, does it not always appear to be a desire for our own satisfaction? When, e.g., we heard of great crimes committed by our enemies in the war, most of us felt as if we were on fire with anger, especially if the crimes had been committed on people we knew and loved. And it was a great satisfaction to many of us—it appeased at least some of our anger—when we heard that those who had committed the crimes had been killed or punished in some painful way. It was with many of us then as it is habitually with the tribes on our Indian frontier. If a member of one clan has been murdered by a member of another clan, the anger thus created is never appeased till one of the latter has been murdered in return. These extreme instances show what our 'anger' is in essence. It is often lauded as though it were a virtue. It is in truth only a survival of the instincts of our savage ancestors. It is an ingredient in the nature of the 'old man,' and should be wholly eradicated from the 'new man'—from those who possess the life and can therefore have the character of Christ.

There is this further proof that our conclusion is a true one—the fact that whereas the exercise of 'meekness' is always a putting forth of strength, the giving way to anger is always a manifestation of weakness. Though it is

frequently denied that this is a fact, our own experiences, if we will examine them, are quite sufficient to show us that it is one. Take any instance we can think of when we gave way to anger against anyone. The cause was some injury that he had inflicted or was supposed to have inflicted. Our duty, in face of this, was plainly to exercise love—to return good for evil—to desire the offender's good rather than his harm. But we were not strong enough to do this. We were weak enough to allow ourselves to be overcome by our anger, and to desire his harm, so that the evil desire of our nature might be satisfied. Instead of using our strength —the strength of love which Christ has given us—to evoke good out of the evil, we weakly gave way under the temptation and added to the evil by making both him and ourselves worse people than we were before. For we must never pretend that the desire for revenge can ever do anything but harm both to its subject and object. 'The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' If we are honest with ourselves we know that this is so. Our desire for the sinner's reformation may indeed often cause us to inflict punishment on him, but the desire that he should be punished in order to give us satisfaction for the injury he has done us, can never do him anything but harm—it is a force making for his further downfall. Meekness, on the other hand—the strong virtue on account of which we assert no claim for satisfaction for any injury which has been done to us, but desire only the good of the injurer—is the most powerful force in existence making for the reformation and salvation of sinful, selfish men.

While meekness is primarily the grace by which we bear any kind of adversity rightly, it issues in and includes the beautiful virtue which is best expressed in English by 'gentleness.'

See Gal. vi. 1 ; 2 Tim. ii. 24–26 ; Tit. iii. 1–7 ; S. Jas. iii. 17 f.

The reason of this is that people who advance no claim for themselves, assert no right of their own, and realize even in bad times that as God is dealing lovingly with them so they ought to deal lovingly with others, get into the habit of considering the feelings of others rather than their own.

And further, they who habitually refuse to dwell on their own injuries, but on the other hand seek the good of those who inflict them, are keeping their hearts open for further outpourings of the love of Christ—that love which gives insight and enables us to understand the feelings of others and their causes, to put ourselves in their place.

The virtue of ' gentleness ' has made itself felt all over the Christian world, and is appreciated everywhere at something like its true value. The word has not been so much misused as meekness has, and therefore gentleness has not been so often associated with weakness. The ' perfect gentil knight ' was not thought of as a weak man, but as a strong one who used his strength not for his own triumph or to take revenge, but to undo wrongs and to protect the weak. He was one, moreover, who courteously considered the feelings of others, and acted accordingly. Our notion of a ' gentleman ' is the same : he is one who knows how to act towards other people, because he tries to put himself in their place, to see and feel things as they see and feel them. A ' gentlewoman ' is, in our minds, one who is never rough to people even if they are rude to her, but bears with them because she sees what excuses are to be made for them. She acts towards those who are in any need—the sick, sorrowful, the poor, or to shy and sensitive people—in such a way as to bring comfort and encouragement, gladness and joy to them. She can minister Christ's own love to those also whom others find difficult to deal with, because she has the strength of love in herself which enables her to bear with the ignorance, the pride, the folly, the bad temper, the crooked ways of those with whom she is trying to make herself one.

' Gentleness ' has very beautiful associations in our minds. It suggests to us the soft answer that ' turneth away wrath ' ; the patient forbearance that at last breaks down even the fiercest opposition ; the generous kindliness that inspires in others a like generosity, often even in those who appear to be the most selfish. We think of it as having a very wide range—as finding expression in all the little kindnesses, courtesies and good manners that do so much to make life delightful, as well as in the dying intercession

and consideration of a martyr for his enemies, S. Stephen, e.g., or Joan of Arc when she said to the priest who held up a crucifix before her dying eyes, 'Take care, father, or the fire will hurt thee': gentleness derived directly from Jesus Himself, who in the time of His agony could see beneath the cruelty and injustice of those who were killing Him to the excuse that could be made for them, and prayed 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

We are surely right in associating gentleness especially with Sisters of Mercy. Our Lord, we are sure, expects it to be highly developed in you whom He calls to live in such close union with Himself. And this is expected of you also by most of the people with whom you come in contact. They would be surprised and shocked if they saw that you resented injuries: they expect from you always the utmost gentleness in thought, word, and manner. And it is because they find it, that so many of them are ready to open their hearts to you, that their natural shyness or reserve gives way, so that they can tell you their difficulties without fear and in the confidence that you will understand and sympathize and help them.

The meek 'shall inherit the earth.'

This promise occurs in Ps. xxxvii. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34; cf. Prov. ii. 21; Is. lvii. 13, lx. 21. It meant that those who claim no rights for themselves but 'wait upon the Lord,' and therefore are capable of receiving the blessings He has in store for them, shall have and retain a portion in the holy land—the land of promise. But some of the prophets even of the Old Testament saw that this literal fulfilment of it was symbolic of a wider spiritual one. The holy land of Palestine symbolized God's inheritance among mankind—the reign of God in His spiritual kingdom—which His faithful chosen people were to enable Him to establish.

As made by Christ to His disciples, the promise has an altogether spiritual meaning. It can mean nothing less than that 'the meek' shall 'reign' with and for Him in the hearts of men, and so help Him to increase His kingdom. It must be equivalent to the promise He made to His

Apostles at the Last Supper. 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations: and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me'[1]: or to the assurance of the Apostle, 'If we endure, we shall also reign with him.'[2] The visions of the Apocalypse show fulfilment of these promises: those whom the Lamb had purchased with His blood, He made to be unto God a kingdom and priests, 'and they reign upon the earth': '(I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God . . . and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'[3] Our Lord did not explain in words what He meant, though His life explained it. As in many other teachings, He left this seeming paradox to sink into their minds, that they might hereafter learn the truth of it, as we also have to learn it through our experience.

We are learning now in India, by means of much vivid and painful experience, that it is only the meek who inherit the earth. If inheriting the earth meant merely reigning over a vast territory such as this great continent, our Lord's words would be unintelligible, for, alas! it cannot be said, even by those who think the best of our race and appreciate all that it has done for India, that the English have reigned over India by meekness. But since it means gaining an inheritance in the hearts of men for Christ that He may reign in them, we certainly have not yet inherited the land of India. And that is because as a race we have to such a large extent manifested not meekness but its opposite. We have ruled over the peoples of India after the manner of 'the kings of the Gentiles,' of whom our Lord said that His disciples were not to imitate them.[4] It is true that the Government of India has consistently cared for the poor; that the Indian Civil Service has worked for their welfare with splendid devotion, especially at all times of unwonted distress. The longer we live in India the more it seems that one cannot speak too highly of the devotion to duty, the self-sacrifice, the generous devotion to the interests of the

[1] S. Luke xxii. 28 f. [2] 2 Tim. ii. 12. [3] Rev. v. 6–10; xx. 4–6.
[4] See the whole passage, S. Luke xxii. 24–30.

poor that have been manifested by the men of the Government Services. Nevertheless, these same men have ruled for the most part as lords, whose manners are those of members of a superior race ruling over inferior ones. They are called Sahibs—the lordly ones—and they act as a rule as though they were proud of the title. They have taken very little trouble to consider the feelings of the educated Indians who work with them, and by means of whom their plans are carried out. And therefore these men who, if the English had habitually shown meekness and gentleness in their dealings with them, would by this time have appreciated their efforts, and might have learned to work with them gladly and to imitate their devotion to the poor, are now seeking to get rid of them as soon as possible. A large number of them are saying openly, and probably almost all the rest are saying in their hearts, We will not have these English to rule over us any more : we will work for *swaraj*. The vast majority of the educated people of India are at one about this. The main difference between them is that while some are seeking to get rid of the English at all costs and to establish a rule of their own in complete independence of them, the majority (at present) see that this would be highly dangerous and foolish, that they would have no safeguard either against anarchy within or invasion from without, and that they must therefore make use of the English, at any rate till they have become strong enough to do without them.

It is one of the saddest things in the history of our Empire that we have not taken the wonderful opportunity that has been given us of ' inheriting ' the land of India : that we have failed to find an entrance into the hearts of the educated, and therefore the future ruling classes, because we have failed in meekness—in that gentleness which would have enabled us to consider their feelings, to make ourselves one with them, and to behave towards them with that kindly courtesy which could win them for Christ.

We are now beginning to learn our lesson, thank God. The manners of the Sahibs towards their Indian fellow-workers on the whole have changed greatly for the better

during the last few years. They are becoming gentle. They have shown marked patience, forbearance, and consideration during the late disturbances, and in the face of a widespread propaganda of slander and lies. If only it is not too late! We must pray and strive in all possible ways that this spirit of gentleness may increase to such an extent in the near future that when at last the *swaraj* does come, for which the late reforms are a preparation, the Indians into whose hands the powers of Government are given may, in spite of the past, welcome the English as their helpers; so that Indians and English work together permanently, though in altered relationship, for the welfare of India.

Meanwhile, let us all learn the lesson taught by our Lord, the truth of which is forced upon our minds by our painful experience in India. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' Blessed, that is, are they who in the strength of Christ's love imparted to them, bear with injuries and injurious men, not seeking revenge but only how to evoke good from the injuries and the repentance and salvation of those who inflict them; and who are gentle towards all.

Blessed are they, for in and through them Christ wins His kingdom.

IV. HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Christian character produces hunger and thirst after righteousness, i.e. an intense desire that the will of God, as it has been revealed in Christ, may be fulfilled.

S. Matt. v. 6 ; vi. 33 ; S. John iv. 34. And (for God's revealed will) see, e.g., S. Luke iv. 16–21 ; S. John iii. 16 f. ; vi. 39 ; S. Matt. xi. 2–6 ; 1 Tim. ii. 3–5 ; iv. 10 ; Tit. ii. 11–14.

It is sometimes said to be fanciful to see a close connection between the different Beatitudes, or to suppose that our Lord pronounced them in a certain order because it was the only right one. But, however that may be, there can be little doubt that this one is, and was put in this place

because it is, the complement of the last, just as the next following is obviously the complement of this one, as we shall see. For meekness in a person who did not hunger and thirst after righteousness might, and probably soon would, degenerate into a weak acquiescence in a standard lower than the true Christian one, or even in what was positively wrong. Or it might become akin to that condition of 'indifference' which the Greek philosophers commended as a virtue. It is only, in fact, when it is combined with this hunger and thirst of which our Lord speaks, that it is of necessity a powerful virtue which requires the putting forth of great strength of will, and makes directly for the establishment and increase of righteousness.

The words hunger and thirst were no doubt chosen to express the desire for righteousness which Christ's disciples must have, because physical hunger and thirst are the most intense desires we know when they are not satisfied. Many desires of the flesh can and ought to be suppressed or allowed to go unsatisfied. But it is not so with hunger and thirst. They must go on increasing in intensity the longer they remain unsatisfied. Our Lord therefore, we may be sure, intended to show us that our desire for righteousness, or the fulfilment of God's will, must be of this kind : that the true citizens of His kingdom can never get accustomed to seeing His will opposed and thwarted ; that, loving as they do with His love, they must increasingly give themselves for the righting of wrongs, the destruction of selfishness and injustice, the establishment and increase of God's kingdom of righteousness everywhere among men. This is indeed the highest kind of desire they can have either in this world or the next until God's kingdom has fully come. That fact is to be borne in mind and held to. The truth of it, however, is not apparent at once.

At first sight it may seem that our Lord is here setting forth a lower standard than that which was expressed by some of the psalmists and prophets in the Old Testament. They speak of a hunger and thirst for God Himself. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.' 'O God, thou art my God ; early will

I seek thee ; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and weary land, where no water is.' 'My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.'[1] And in such words as these multitudes of Christian saints have expressed the highest longings of their souls. Are they not higher longings : do they not include and transcend those of which our Lord is here speaking ? We can only answer that question if we consider carefully in the light of Christ's teaching and of our own experience what hunger and thirst for righteousness amounts to, and what were the probable reasons why our Lord chose that expression rather than those of the psalmists.

We all know by much sad experience what a strong tendency there is in people who, like ourselves, value religion, to seek communion with God for their own sakes rather than for His. The whole religious history of mankind shows that men of all the different faiths that we know of have used religion chiefly because of what they supposed they could get out of it for themselves. We do not leave our selfishness behind when we give our attention to religion, and therefore, unless our religion with the practice thereof is of such a kind as gradually to destroy selfishness, it may and almost certainly will increase it. It is consequently of the very utmost importance that the aim of our religious life should be from the outset the true and not a false one.

The teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, by word and example, as recorded in the New Testament, puts the true aim before us with such clearness that those who study it with care and seek to model their lives in accordance with it, can scarcely be mistaken as to what the aim of a Christian should be. Our Lord founded the one true religion by means of which all men, of whatever race, who follow it faithfully, can have their selfishness destroyed step by step and their lives fashioned after the likeness of Christ Himself. The teaching of the New Testament, from our present point of view, is briefly as follows. Our Lord was sent into the world, not to please Himself, but to do His Father's will.

[1] Ps. xlii. 1, 2 ; lxiii. 1 ; lxxxiv. 2.

That will is that the whole race of mankind should be saved from their sin and their selfishness, and made partakers of the life of God, who is love. Therefore He, in the first place, spent all the powers of His own human nature in loving, giving Himself wholly in the service of His Father and His fellow-men, and resisting to the uttermost all the temptation that could be brought against Him to use His power for the mere satisfaction of His own human desires. The result was that at the time of His death His human nature was in a condition of 'having nothing' that He could call His own, not even the consciousness of His Father's love, and yet 'possessing all things,' i.e. being filled with the Divine life that God had eternally purposed to give to human nature. He had made human nature able to deny itself utterly, and live only for the fulfilling of God's will, and therefore God could fulfil His will in and through it.

Meanwhile, Christ had taught His disciples that they too must live only for the one purpose of doing God's will. His own meat, He said, was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to accomplish His work. And, as the Father had sent Him, so He sent his disciples to live like Himself: in other words, to 'hunger and thirst after righteousness,' i.e. to find their whole satisfaction not in anything which was merely for themselves, but solely in the increase of God's kingdom. That His disciples in every age may thus live, He gives His own glorified human life to them, and so makes them to become 'workers together with him' for the salvation of all mankind. Their religion therefore, He teaches them, is to have God's will only for its object. They are always to pray, in the first place, that God's name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, and His will be done; not merely for what they want, but for what God wants. All the other prayers they say, or works they do, are to have the same object. Their whole religious life therefore is to be like Christ's own, one which destroys selfishness and enables them to have an ever increasing share in God's life—the life of self-giving love. Only in so far as their life is of this kind can God accomplish His purpose through them. There are repeated warnings in the New Testament, given

by our Lord Himself and by His Apostles, against any other kind of religious life : for He and they knew the great danger we are all in of making religion minister to our selfishness. ' Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.' [1] That is the burden of Christ's many words of warning. And the fiercest words He is ever recorded to have uttered were said to those religious Scribes and Pharisees who sought their own ends in religion instead of God's.[2] His Apostles follow Him in their desire to warn men from false aims in religion. S. Paul, for instance, warns the Corinthians, who had received abnormal spiritual gifts which brought them much ecstatic joy as well as great honour, that such gifts were of no account in comparison with those which enabled them to serve God by serving their fellow-men. Far beyond all other gifts, he said, is love—the love that ' seeketh not its own ' but ' endureth all things.' To the Galatians he said ' Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' And in his other epistles he speaks at length of the duties of Christians to one another and to the world, and says they are following Christ—their religion is the true one—only so far as they are living no longer for themselves, but for the fulfilment of these duties. Christians are members of the Body of Christ through which God is fulfilling His eternal purpose ' to sum up all things in Christ ' ; they must therefore, as Christ does, give themselves wholly to help Him to fulfil this purpose. The Christian religion is to enable them to do this. S. John also utters the same warnings in his still more forcible way. He had found people who said they loved God—religious people, no doubt, who got much self-satisfaction out of their religion—but who, as he put it, hated their brethren. He said they were liars : they did not love God, ' for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen.' [3] The burden of his whole teaching is that the religion of Christ is to produce self-giving love, and that any religion which does not do this is not true ; it is not of God.

[1] S. Matt. vii. 21. [2] S. Matt. vi. 5–7 ; xxiii. [3] 1 S. John iv. 20.

Our own experience is sufficient to show us that these warnings of the New Testament are still greatly needed by religious people. We have all known what it is to seek God for our own sakes rather than for His : to seek communion with Him chiefly that our souls may be filled with joy. And it is not uncommon to find devout people who with great assiduity seek satisfaction in religious practices or in the rites of the Church, while they are neglecting plain and obvious duties to their fellow-men. It is of course to be expected that people who, like you, see clearly that a life of prayer is to be aimed at before all else, should have special temptations to fight against : temptations to consider other works of more importance than prayer, because they are easier and more in accordance with our natural inclination ; or, if such are resisted, temptations to seek self-satisfaction in prayer rather than the power to do God's will. And these latter may, and probably have, often come through treatises on prayer or systems of prayer which have the names of great saints and mystics behind them. It seems strange at first that this should be the case, though it is not really very difficult to account for it. The saintly Christian mystics themselves whose writings we possess were so filled with the love of God that selfishness appears to have been almost completely destroyed in them. Though they would have been the first to deny that this was the case, yet they were in comparison with ordinarily devout Christians very heroic servants of God, who sought above all else to do His will and not their own, whose lives therefore had wonderful effects for the spread of His kingdom. And the writings in which they attempt to describe their experiences or the ways in which God had led them to Himself, were meant for people who were already far advanced in the ways of love. But since such people are very rare in each generation, these writings, which are now published for all who will to read, fall mostly into the hands of people whose selfishness is as yet far from being overcome by love and who therefore unconsciously seize upon all that ministers to self-love in these mystical treatises. All of us who have read many of them must be aware that there is a great deal

in them which does this. For they contain many accounts of such blissful experiences of the saints in their communion with God, that we who read them are filled with longings for at least some share in their indescribable joy. When therefore we go on to read of the steps by which these great people were led towards God, the temptation becomes almost irresistible to follow their systems so far as we have the power and opportunity, in order to attain to their joy. And the danger becomes worse still for many people because a persevering use of some of these systems of prayer enables them to enter, at least occasionally, into subconscious states of mind, where they have abnormal and delightful experiences apparently wrought in them by the Spirit of God, but which are not necessarily anything more than the natural workings of their own minds.

If we bear in mind and combine the above considerations, we can see at least some of the reasons why our Lord substituted the phrase 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' for 'hunger and thirst for God.' The two phrases have indeed the same meaning, but the former indicates more clearly what the true meaning of the latter is. The latter would appear to those, who had not yet conquered their self-love, to imply that our Lord was encouraging them to seek God for their own sakes—to satisfy their own hunger and thirst; whereas the former could not be misunderstood by anyone. To take an analogy from human love, the latter phrase would appear to correspond with the desire of a lover to gain possession of his beloved for himself; the former with his desire to devote himself to her service at whatever cost to himself.

We cannot be led astray while we follow the guidance of our Lord and His Apostles as it is recorded in the New Testament. They show plainly what the one aim of our life should be and by what paths we must travel from first to last in order to fulfil it. Our hunger and thirst, the intensest longings of our souls, are to be that God's revealed purposes may be accomplished; that His righteousness, His goodness, His love, may fill the world. In striving for this we are serving Him as He asks us to serve Him; our

souls are athirst for God in the highest sense, for, as S. Leo says, 'to love God is to love nothing but righteousness': we are desiring not anything merely for ourselves, but that His name may be hallowed, His kingdom come, His will be done; we are on the path along which all the great mystics travelled, at the end of which they found, as we believe, that God had been able to take entire possession of them; that they willed and would for ever will only what He willed; that they lived indeed the highest life that creatures can live, though they felt it was not they but Christ who lived wholly in them.

Let us go on to consider in some detail what hunger and thirst after righteousness implies for us in this world:

(i) *It implies an intense desire for our own righteousness,* i.e. that Christ may reign more completely in us: that we may become more conformed to His image. But such desire is to be no mere longing for self-satisfaction or for a high place in the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ's true disciples strive for their own righteousness because they realize that if they give way to any form of selfishness they are hindering the coming of His kingdom, not only in themselves but also in those with whom they are in contact. It would be well if we all realized how much our sins and selfishness hinder the fulfilment of God's purposes. In regard to some of our sins it is obvious enough that they are a great hindrance to others: e.g. if we give way to bad temper or irritation, it is plain that we are creating a poisonous atmosphere which makes life unpleasant and difficult for all who are in immediate contact with us; whereas if we are controlling our temper and are patient and loving under trying circumstances, we are creating an atmosphere which tends to gladden and strengthen all who enter it. But it is not always so obvious, though it is always the fact, that every sin we commit and every form of selfishness we give way to, even though no one on earth sees or knows of it, hinders the whole Body of Christ. For we are members of the body, and if one member suffers all the members suffer with it.[1]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 26 f.

That is the negative side: the positive is that we are all instruments whom God is seeking to fashion and perfect that He may use us in His work of redemption. He requires us therefore to strive and pray that we may be as useful as possible, 'meet for the Master's use.' Hence in this hunger and thirst for our own righteousness no selfish element need enter. Our efforts after holiness can be all for Christ and for our fellow-men for His sake. We can, and must, seek for closer communion with our Lord solely that we may be of more use to Him. And if our life of prayer has always this one aim, then our meditations and our contemplation of God, and all our worship of Him, will always be combined with intercession for others. Each of us will pray in the spirit of one who realizes that 'I' am only one of the many I have to pray for: only one of the many I have to lift up to God that they with me may be His faithful servants. We shall, as S. Paul did, 'press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,' remembering always that that high calling is to be saviours and not merely saved, sharers in Christ's pain and travail, bearers of His Cross, seekers after His kingdom and righteousness at whatever cost to ourselves: in a word, to strive that love (*ἀγάπη*) may take the place of selfishness in all parts of our being.

(ii) *It implies an undying zeal for the perfection of those who are already in Christ, especially those who are closely related to us by natural and spiritual ties.*

There is to be an order in the love of our 'neighbour' such as is implied in the saying 'charity begins at home.' It is manifested clearly in the record of our Lord's life. He first consecrated *Himself*. Step by step with great labour and unceasing prayer He brought all parts of His human nature wholly into the service of God—made Himself a perfect instrument for the salvation of mankind. And next He devoted Himself to His own family and (afterwards) to those who were the most closely related to Him by spiritual ties—His disciples and intimate friends, especially the twelve. We have only to read the Gospels carefully

to become aware that during His ministry our Lord devoted by far the most part of the time and energy He spent in the service of men to the little band of His devoted disciples, just as He had devoted Himself in His early years to His family at Nazareth.[1] And then, as coming afterwards in order, He gave Himself to the service of the rest of men.

Those therefore in whom Christ lives, who depend upon Him wholly for guidance and strength, observe an order in their love which corresponds with this, though most of them appear to have many temptations to depart from it. Let us take your case as an example. You are called to serve God as Sisters in a non-Christian country, and therefore you are given very many opportunities for living in close communion with Christ. Your vocation implies that your own families—those with whom you are united by ties of blood—are to have the first place, next to God, in your hearts. You are indeed called to leave your homes, as Christ left His, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, but for this very reason you are to give more and not less of your love to those whom you have left. You are not to make the mistake that was often made in former centuries of thinking that a call to the ' Religious Life ' means becoming ' indifferent ' to the special ties which bind you to your relatives ; for that would mean, though this was not understood, that the religion of the ' Religious ' was of a different kind from that of Christ. In this as in other respects we have to remember and take warning from what plainly appears in the history of the Church of Christ, that just as in the Jewish Church there had grown up a tradition, as our Lord pointed out, which caused men to depart in many important matters from the law of God, so in the Christian Church there grew up and increased in force through some centuries a ' Religious ' tradition, which caused those who followed it to depart in many respects from the law and order of love which Christ proclaimed, both by His teaching and example.

Next, you are to follow Christ's example in giving your

[1] This was pointed out with great clearness by Dr. Latham in *Pastor Pastorum*.

love and care chiefly to those who are the most closely connected with you by spiritual ties, that is, to your own Sisters. It may often seem to you that there are many reasons against this. You may think, for instance, My Sisters have a great deal of love given to them already; their lives, in comparison with those of the Indian women I am working among, are full. Surely I ought to give my best love and all my most diligent care to those who have scarcely any other love given to them, for whom scarcely anyone cares. This sounds very plausible—so plausible that you have probably often acted upon it. But a similar argument might have been, perhaps was, suggested to our Lord's mind. The action of His Life, however, denies that it is a true one. In His case we can see the reason for this, which it is often not at all easy to see in such a case as yours. He had come to save all mankind. It was therefore especially necessary that He should form a band of disciples who might become a spiritual and organized body in which His love was generated in great force, and through which it could be poured forth into the world. There is a similar necessity now in India. Christ has come to save India. Therefore He has, among His other plans, formed you into a spiritual and organized body in which His love may be generated for the benefit of India. Your community is meant to bear the same kind of relation to the Divine love that a power house bears to electricity. Hence, next to loving your own families, it is your chief duty to pour out love into your Sisters—kind, gentle, forbearing and forgiving love, love which has in it Christ's own power of insight into their needs and of wisdom to see how they are to be fulfilled. If such love as this is constantly flowing from each into all the rest, then a mighty force of love is being generated within the community through which God is able to effect wonderful transformations in India : it is a force which is far greater and of a higher quality than your love would be if it were merely that which you as separate individuals gave to the people of India. Bearing in mind, then, the force which the infant Church of Christ brought to bear upon the world because it was a body organized in

love, you will understand that you are to seek the perfection of your own Sisters before that of the people you are sent to minister to : to hunger and thirst that God's righteousness may fill them—that the love of Christ may rule their hearts.

And what is true of you as a Community of Sisters is true of all who have been formed into groups either by natural or spiritual ties. We are to seek the perfection of those who are nearest to us, and especially those of them who are nearest to Christ, before our hearts travel outside that circle. We are to hunger and thirst that they may hallow God's name, let Christ reign in their hearts, and do God's will, in whatever respects we see that they are not doing so. This does not mean that we are to be constantly complaining of their faults, or setting ourselves up as their judges ; this is indeed impossible to those whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ. But it means that the force which we send forth towards them habitually by the thoughts of our minds and the love of our hearts is a healing, uplifting force—a force which effectually makes for their increase in righteousness : in other words, a force which constantly helps them to love God and their fellow-men more.

(iii) *It implies an intense desire that the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.*

For charity, while it ' begins at home,' cannot stop there. It only begins there that, when it goes outside, it may be a much more powerful virtue than it could have been if it had neglected home. It is of the essence of the Divine charity that it cannot stop or be stopped at all ; that there is no barrier in existence which can prevent its flow ; that any barriers which are set up against it only serve to increase the force it puts forth to overthrow them.

The condition of mankind on the earth now, however much it is improving—and, thank God, it does appear to be improving very greatly in many respects—is still bad enough to evoke such hunger and thirst after righteousness as can far overpass all the selfish desires that remain in us. The vision of it which comes before *our* minds with the most

vividness is of course the condition of the peoples of India ; and especially (to you) that of the women of India. There is no need to attempt a description of it here. It is always before our minds. We see it in the light of what might be ; of what would be if Christ reigned in righteousness in India. We are watching Him beginning to establish His kingdom here and there. We see the influence of these small beginnings making itself felt far and wide ; working as leaven in the whole lump ; stirring what was a vast inert mass into some kind of life, which has indeed many very disagreeable consequences at first, but yet is, we can believe, the beginning of a share in the resurrection of Christ Himself from the dead. And as we watch all this, we cannot but be aware that He is calling us to help Him, that in India most markedly, as of old in Palestine, ' the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out . . . to hire labourers into his vineyard.'

The realization of this, together with the knowledge of what our Lord has always been to ourselves, ought to be sufficient to create in us an eager desire for the increase of His kingdom, which far outweighs, as a motive for our life's action, all the desires we ever feel for self-satisfaction.

The same is to be said with respect to all the stirrings that the ' leaven ' of Christ is effecting now in other parts of the world. There has never been a time in the whole history of man when the power of Christ to transform our whole race has been so abundantly and splendidly manifested. The disciples of Christ can give themselves for His service with more of the enthusiasm which is begotten of hope for His ultimate victory than ever before. His purpose for the whole race, and the certainty that He is working it out in spite of, and, more wonderful still, often by means of, the appalling selfishness of its members, have never been shown to the same extent before. Not merely visionaries and unreasoning enthusiasts, but what we call hard-headed, practical, sober-minded, business-like people in most countries of the world are beginning to understand, as never before, what God's righteousness means ; to realize that Christ's principles, which used to be disregarded and even

scorned as unpractical, are the only true ones—the only ones which can lead men and nations towards their full, true life. And Christ is saying to us all, Go, work in this vineyard of mine where these things are happening—where there are so many hopeful signs of the glorious beauty that can be produced in it, which will be produced as soon as I have fellow-workers enough.

All this, let me repeat, ought to be sufficient to cause us to desire the full coming of Christ's kingdom much more intensely than we desire anything else whatever, and to give ourselves with all the powers we have for His service. It ought to be sufficient. But our own past experience gives us no ground for hope that this hunger and thirst will abide in us except on the one condition laid down for us by our Lord, 'Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.' The consideration of each of the different facets of the Christian character brings us back to this. For it is the character of Christ, and we have no grounds for expecting that it can become our character except in so far as we abide in Christ, i.e. seek His society, communion with Him, before all else.

This will become plainer still if we consider how much is implied in the expression 'hunger and thirst.' Physical hunger and thirst are essential instincts of our nature in this life. So far as we are without food and drink we *must* be hungry and thirsty. Our Lord then in effect tells us that in so far as we partake of His character—in so far, that is, as we abide in Him—spiritual hunger and thirst after righteousness become essential instincts of our recreated nature: so that whenever we are conscious of the lack of righteousness, either in ourselves or in those who are nearest to us, or in the kingdoms of the world in general, we *must* long and strive for its increase—it is impossible for us not to do so. However great may be the other desires of our nature, this one must be greater than all, and must increase in intensity the longer it remains unsatisfied. That is the high and holy condition of all who are in Christ, so far as they live by His life: their tendencies to selfishness are

annulled by their overmastering desire that God's kingdom may come and His will be done. S. John puts it in what is, if possible, a more forcible way still. He says 'everyone that loveth,' i.e. giveth himself for the fulfilment of God's will, 'is begotten of God and knoweth God.' He is a new creature. The desires of his old nature are become new. And 'whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his (God's) seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God': 'whosoever abideth in him sinneth not': 'we know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not, but he that was begotten of God (i.e. Christ) keepeth him, and the evil one toucheth him not.'[1] These seem strange and wonderful words to us sinners in our present condition of mingled good and evil, love and selfishness. Yet our own consciousness bears witness to the truth of them. For we are conscious that there is within us a principle of new life which does make it impossible for us to sin—to give way to selfishness—so long as we hold to it. And we are conscious that the new life comes from Christ, and that holding to it means holding fast to Him. We are aware also that, so far as we leave Him and go our own way, we seek ourselves and our own satisfaction rather than His righteousness: the spiritual hunger, which is an essential part of our new nature, is for the time in abeyance.

In order then that we may habitually and at all times long for God's righteousness much more than we desire anything else, a life of very close communion with our Lord is the one thing needful. If we do abide in Christ, then these effects follow: we give ourselves for the service of God—to establish and increase righteousness; to right the wrongs of men and women; to cause God to be better understood and loved; to enable Christ to increase His kingdom in the hearts of men; to enable God to fulfil His purposes of love for all mankind. Further, we strive for these results always by righteous means, being sure that it is never right to do evil that good may come, and that a bad or untrue action may never be considered a good one because the end in view is good. And, once more, while the sympathy and

[1] 1 S. John iv. 7; iii. 9, 6; v. 18.

desire of our hearts are given for the furtherance of all the good causes that we know of, we concentrate our main efforts in finding out what particular tasks God is assigning to *us*, and in doing them as well as possible. The world contains a very large number of well-meaning people who make spasmodic efforts after righteousness; of people also who, because they leave themselves no time to wait upon God, are for ever going from one thing to another as if the burden of the world were on their shoulders; or who toil with feverish anxiety to effect the reforms they desire, as if it were always a case of now or never; or who are not very particular as to the means they employ, nor careful to consider the condition and the feelings of the people who are to be reformed, because of their eager haste to get things done. The righteousness of God is not established nor is His kingdom increased by such methods. Our Lord's own method, on which we have dwelt, is the only true one. His main endeavour was to live habitually in such close communion with His Father that He was guided and enabled by Him for every action. And our main endeavour must be precisely the same.

Christ promises that they who hunger and thirst after righteousness 'shall be filled.'

All the promises of 'reward' that are held out in the New Testament to those who give themselves to the service of God, may be said to be summed up in this promise. It follows therefore, from what we have said above, that the only 'rewards' God offers are to people who do not work for reward at all, and that those who do seek for rewards for themselves can never be 'filled' until they cease to do so. The spirit which prompted S. Peter's question 'Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?' was always rebuked by our Lord, as on that occasion by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. All those who offer themselves for God's service receive what is necessary to enable them to spend themselves in that service; they receive Christ's life. And their reward consists in the joy of their service, i.e. in that they are enabled to give themselves for

the Householder and for the vineyard—for the increase of the fruits of righteousness among men—instead of living for themselves. Those who, like the grumblers of the parable, seek their own, and consider their work only as a reason for gaining recompense for themselves, are 'the last' in the kingdom of God: it is impossible that they can be 'filled' till their spirit is wholly changed. For our nature was created to be filled with God, i.e. with Divine love; in other words, to find its life by giving its life away. That is the great paradox which our Lord put before His disciples, and its truth is found in our own experience. Who of us does not know that so far as he seeks himself and his own satisfaction or reward, he remains empty of all that is worthy of being called life; and, on the other hand, that so far as he forgets himself—gives himself away in the service of others—he realizes what it is to be 'filled'? The service of God is perfect freedom—freedom from the bondage of selfishness: it is therefore the only perfect joy we can obtain. For this joy that was set before Him—the joy of giving Himself to fulfil His Father's desire for the salvation of mankind—our Lord, we are told, 'endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'[1] It is this joy which He offers His disciples as their reward—the joy of being able to give themselves for God's service at whatever cost to themselves, because their 'hunger and thirst after righteousness' is far stronger than any other desire they have. On earth this means the joy of being able to live a life of self-sacrifice for the sake of God and our fellow-men, from which our own selfish strivings for satisfaction or rewards are being gradually but surely eliminated. What it will mean hereafter when the kingdom has fully come—when Christ sees of the travail of His soul and is wholly satisfied, when God is 'all in all,' and when we through the power of Christ see God as He is and have become 'like Him' in the perfection of His self-giving, we cannot in this life imagine.

[1] Heb. xii. 2.

V. MERCY

Mercy is not only an essential element in the Christian character; it is also the principal distinguishing mark of it in this life.

Mercy in us, as in God, is love in relation to those who have fallen below their true condition, and has these characteristics, that it is quick (a) to see what is the matter, (b) to feel compassion, (c) to go to the rescue.

S. Matt. v. 7 ; S. Luke vi. 27–36; S. Jas. iii. 17 ; v. 11; 2 Cor. i. 3 ; cf. S. Luke i. 54 f., 72 ; S. Matt. ix. 10–13 ; xii. 1–8 ; Rom. xv. 9 ; Eph. ii. 4 ff. ; 1 S. Peter, i. 3.

See also, e.g., S. Matt. ix. 35–38; xiv. 14; S. Mark viii. 1–3; S. Luke x. 30–35 ; vii. 12–15 ; xv. 20–24.

Mercy is not a virtue distinct from love. It is love in a particular aspect or relation. God's love in relation to His rational creatures is His desire that they may be filled with His life, and His consequent gift of Himself to them. His mercy is this same love in relation to those of them who have, like man, fallen below their true condition. His love therefore, as manifested to us, is always mercy : love given to those whose capacity for receiving it is not what it ought to be, and who suffer manifold ills either on account of their own sins or those of others. It is the same unchanging love that God *is*, but with another aspect or quality—that of compassion—because of man's condition in this life. It is God ' suffering with ' His beloved ones ; suffering because they suffer, and because His gift of Himself only finds entrance into them with great difficulty. On account of the surpassing beauty of God's love thus manifested as mercy, it seems to us that we could never have understood the truth about His nature, as we now can, if we had not known Him as the God of sinners. There appears to be much excuse for the exclamation ' O felix culpa ! ' We need not enter here upon the theological speculations which this suggests. But we do greatly need to have our attention directed again and again to the revelation of God's love which has actually been made to us. The extent of His mercy, i.e. the lengths to which He is willing to go in order

to rescue the fallen and raise them to their ideal condition, is depicted for us in the crucifix. From it we learn that it is of His essence to go to the extremity of self-sacrifice—to empty Himself to the uttermost—for His creatures, that they may at last, in spite of all opposition, be filled with His life. 'God commendeth his own love towards us,' says S. Paul, 'in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.'[1] S. John reminds us in like manner, 'Herein was the love of God manifested in our case, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son (to be) the propitiation for our sins.'[2]

The most perfect and entrancing representation of God as exercising His mercy towards His people continually on earth, is in the parable of the prodigal son. The perfection of that story consists partly in its being given in outline only, so that it evokes our own powers of loving imagination to fill it in. Let us attempt to do this now. We have to try to imagine the father's condition of mind and heart during the long interval between the going away and the return of the prodigal. By reason of somewhat similar experience we can, to some extent, imagine the agonizing blow he suffered when his son, to whom he had always poured out the whole love of his heart, decided to leave home—to break off communication with him—to reject his love, and seek satisfaction in his own way. We can imagine this, however, only to a limited extent. For God the Father is the creator of His sons, the giver to them at every moment of all the life they have, and He has given and continues to give them a nature of such a kind that it can only be filled with Himself—with His love received by them and returned. When therefore they elect to sever their connection with Him, and to seek to fill their nature with something else, they are not only giving Him the worst blow that ingratitude can give to love, but they are rushing to their own destruction—are cutting themselves off from Him Who is their sole source of life. How can any experience we have enable us to

[1] Rom. v. 8. [2] 1 S. John iv. 9, 10.

realize what this must mean to Him who is our creator because He is perfect love ?

But we must try to think of what the whole interval means to the father till his son begins to return, i.e. of what it is to God to see His sons seeking one kind of sinful satisfaction after another, sinking lower and lower till they have reached the extremity of degradation, misery and emptiness ; for the story is of one who sounded the lowest depths of selfishness. We cannot measure the suffering of God, but we can at least learn this from the story, that the more sinners fall and the greater their misery and emptiness, the more perfect becomes the manifestation of His mercy. The story tells of nothing but mercy on the part of the father. However great was his hatred of his son's sin, and his sorrow because of his son's degradation, he shows *towards his son* no wrath at all—nothing but mercy and joyful welcoming love as he turns to come back. His motives for going back were of a very low kind, nevertheless his father does not even wait for him to get back, ' but while he was yet afar off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.' And when he had brought him into his home he treated him as though he were worthy of all the best that a father can give to his son. There was no word of rebuke because the prodigal had dragged his father's name in the mire, no sign of punishment inflicted by the father, but only every possible attempt ' to make merry and be glad.'

The story can only mean that God our Father is all mercy —that His love is of such a kind that it becomes mercy always to all who have fallen below their true condition ; that His whole being is in action to induce His sinful or unhappy sons to come to Him, and that as soon as He finds any entrance into their hearts, it is as though He forgets all that they have done against Him in His great joy at being able to find some abiding place for Himself in their souls, from which He can work for their perfection.

The story of the prodigal is so absorbing that we are apt to forget what the parable teaches about God's mercy to those who are represented by the elder son. In many

respects he must have been a greater trial to his father than the prodigal. For though he could say 'Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine,' yet his heart, as was seen when his brother came back, had been getting so hardened by selfishness that he was making it more and more impossible for love to fill it. The story leaves him in this condition, though his father still says to him, 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that is mine is thine.' That part of the parable is full of sadness, as the other part is of joy. It tells of God our Father giving all that He has—pouring out the infinite treasures of His love—for those in whose hearts He has not yet found a resting place, and who are in worse condition than open sinners in this respect, that they think they are good and loving while they are hard and selfish, think they are serving God while they serve themselves. It gives us a picture of our Father waiting, longing, being all compassion and of infinite patience till He can by some means find an entrance into hearts that are at present shut to Him.

It is no easy matter for us to maintain this high belief about God. That God *is* perfect Love and therefore perfect Mercy makes more demand on our faith than any other truth about Him. The prevalence of false theories of Christ's Atonement which were based on the assumption that the greatest of all sacrifices was necessary to evoke God's mercy, bears witness to the difficulty the Christian Church felt in believing that God is love. The same can be said of many of the prayers for mercy that the Church has put into the mouths of her members. No such prayer should ever be used as though it were an entreaty to God to be more merciful than He is. Such prayer would be an insult to Him who is 'the Father of mercies,' whose mercy endureth for ever and is over all His works. The meaning of such prayers should always be that His mercy may avail for us—that we may be able to appropriate it—as in our antiphon at Terce, 'O let thy loving mercies come unto me that I may live.'

The mercy manifested by Christ in His dealings with men on earth is the mercy of God appropriated by and

exercised through human nature : it is Divine Mercy become also human. Christ's works of mercy can be gathered together into one picture by means of the parable of the good Samaritan, in whom is depicted the Divine-human character of Christ in His relation to all who have fallen below their ideal condition. We are bidden to notice about the Samaritan that, whereas the priest and the Levite when they saw the wounded man passed by on the other side, when he saw him he was ' moved with compassion,' i.e. that his character was of such a kind that the sight of the wounded man's sufferings evoked compassion from him, as if automatically, with the result that he went to him, ' bound up his wounds . . . and took care of him.' Being what he was, he could not have done otherwise. The Evangelists frequently record the fact that Jesus was ' moved with compassion.' The sins and sufferings of men with whom He came in contact produced of necessity, because His character is what it is, that reaction in Him ; it was impossible for Him not to feel compassion and not to go to the rescue. Yet such compassion is no necessary instinct in human nature, considered merely as such. We in whom the sight of suffering inevitably produces compassion and the desire to help, are apt to forget this. Yet just as in Christ's days in Palestine it was common for people, even religious people, to see a man who was in such bad case as the man in the parable without feeling any desire to go to his rescue, so is it quite common in India to-day. Many of us have got accustomed to this now, but we can all remember how surprised and horrified we were, when we first came out, to see that it was so. There is in human nature, as such, just as there is in animals, an instinct which moves us to go to the rescue of our own offspring when they are helpless. That was evidently implanted in us that the race might survive. But the instinct which moves men to show mercy to all who are in need of it, without distinction—which makes it impossible for them not to do so—is, like hunger and thirst after righteousness, an endowment of human nature as it is in Christ, transformed, made new. It is the chief distinguishing mark of the New Man. Its influence is felt

indeed far beyond the limits of the Christian Church, the Body of Christ, e.g. the members of the Ram Krishna Mission are constantly engaged in beautiful works of mercy even when they involve considerable risk to themselves, as we can bear witness. Christ is in touch with the whole of humanity, and His gift of mercy is received often through most unlikely channels, and exercised by many who do not yet acknowledge Him as their Lord and Saviour—who would even repudiate with indignation the suggestion that their virtue of mercy had come from Him. This, however, on account of which we can thank God and take courage, does not contradict the truth that God Incarnate, whose human name is Jesus, is the one source of the Divine mercy to the human race. Through Christ God gives us His own power of mercy to work with. Love and therefore mercy ' is of God ' and not of man as such. It is to man a supernatural virtue which enables him to rise far beyond his merely human powers—to adopt and maintain God's own attitude towards all who are in need. Wherefore Christ says to His disciples ' Be ye merciful even as your Father is merciful.' Christ's faithful disciples who abide in Him actually are. It is impossible for them not to show mercy to those of whose needs they are aware.

We ought, however, to consider carefully what showing mercy implies, which we can best do by studying the connection between mercy and other virtues of the Christian character. For, as we have repeatedly said, no virtue of this character stands alone : each one helps to perfect and is perfected by the others. Let us see how it is so in this case.

Mercy perfects and is perfected by hunger and thirst after righteousness.

A very strong desire for righteousness—a strong sense of justice as it is often called—needs to be supplemented by the quality of mercy. Otherwise it would, as indeed it often does, produce hardness of heart towards sinners, censoriousness and pride. Strenuous reformers who have a great zeal for righteousness often defeat their own ends

by their hard judgements or bitter words, by want of love for those who need reformation or for those through whom they seek to carry out the reforms they desire. It is no uncommon thing to hear complaints against zealous religious people that they are much 'harder' than people whose standard is not so high. I heard once of a request made by some planters that a parson might be sent to them, and they added 'he mustn't be too good if he is to be the sort of parson we need': as if a man with a high standard of righteousness could not be expected to have much sympathy with people who were constantly tempted as they were. This is, alas! only one instance of a widespread opinion.

But mercy prevents, is the contradiction of, hardness of heart. One who possesses and manifests the mercy of Christ, as you are specially called to do, feels more compassion and a more eager desire to go to the rescue, the higher his standard of righteousness becomes. For, as he comes to understand better what men can be, what God's ideal for them is, more and more mercy is evoked from him for those who have fallen below this ideal condition. Moreover, one whose heart is filled with the mercy of Christ knows instinctively that love is the only power in existence which can raise men to their ideal condition. He can therefore conquer the temptations to hardness of heart, anger, censoriousness, selfishness or pride which may come to him in his dealings with those who are the objects of his compassion. He acts in fact as the Good Samaritan acted; it has become impossible for him to act in any other way.

On the other hand mercy needs to be fortified by hunger and thirst after righteousness, lest it should degenerate into that weak counterfeit quality which is so frequently desired instead of Christian mercy. We have a continuous experience which shows the truth of this. In India people come to us and desire from us this spurious virtue which goes by the name of mercy; they desire that we shall overlook their sin, and treat them as though they had not committed it, not on the understanding that they repent of it and desire to give it up, but because they think we are too

'good-natured' to punish them for it or keep it in mind. Mercy means for them licence to sin without being punished for it. They desire a kind of compassion which, if it is given, tends to weaken their wills and destroy their character. Yet the temptation to give them what they desire is often almost irresistible. For the people, young or old, who are sent to us here to be trained and strengthened, have had for the most part an impoverished, joyless life, in which there has been no strengthening discipline, and almost nothing to teach them what righteousness is. Their wills are as weak as water, and they are at the mercy of any attractive temptation that comes to them. On account of this they appeal as forcibly to our compassion as they do to our affections by their winning ways. And we are tempted to say in our hearts, Poor things, they have never known what life can be, we must give them a good time while they are with us, and introduce as much joy into their lives as we can; they have never been taught to obey anyone, and have been so used to sinning that they scarcely think of sin as sin; we mustn't be hard on them, but must to a large extent overlook their faults and not dishearten them by punishment or much discipline; or, They are very poor and so are their people, we must give them as much as we can without expecting them to pay for it. Temptations of this kind have been constantly assailing not only us, but all other Missions. And most of us have yielded to them, with the result that, instead of strengthening peoples' wills for their hard fight, our weak compassion has weakened them still more; seeking to be kind, we have not disciplined their characters; trying 'good-naturedly' to relieve their poverty, we have encouraged them to depend on us, instead of making those efforts of their own which we ought to have evoked from them. We are learning now what our mistake was, because we have witnessed on a large scale the very distressing results of it. And—this is our main reason for dwelling on it here—we have come to see that our methods have been in the past in glaring contrast with those of our Lord. He was indeed so full of compassion that He could not refuse to heal the sick or to give other temporal benefits, even though

His wonderful works often made it more difficult to fulfil the purpose for which He had come, because they tended so strongly to give people a wrong impression of what His purpose was. Yet His work for men, considered as a whole, was in exact accord with the severity of His teaching and with the high demands He made upon them, as when, e.g., 'he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.'[1] (This teaching, be it remembered, was not given merely to people whose lives were full, but to 'the multitude'—the village people of Galilee—who must have made the same kind of appeal to His compassion, and for much the same reasons, that our Christian people here make to us.) It was on this account that at the end of His ministry, instead of being the popular hero He might have become—the leader or king that the whole multitude would have followed with the utmost enthusiasm—He was rejected by them all, and done to death as one of the worst of malefactors.

In our estimate of our Lord's life we are apt to think of His mercy as manifested chiefly in what we call His 'works of mercy,' in which He relieved men's temporal wants: we are apt to lose sight of the fact that by far the greatest manifestations of His mercy were His persistent refusals to give them what they wanted, to be the kind of benefactor or king they desired; and His constant attempts to evoke from them as much effort as they were capable of making, to induce them both by His teaching and example to take up the cross and bear it with Him for the sake of the world. Herein was His mercy gloriously displayed, at the utmost cost to Himself. It was mercy perfected by His hunger and thirst after righteousness, His zeal to establish the kingdom of God among men. It was indeed a perfect manifestation in human nature of the mercy of the eternal Father Himself who made men to share in His own life, and who therefore works unceasingly

[1] S. Mark viii. 34 f.

to raise them to their ideal condition, and, as we may dare to say, the more strenuously the more they have fallen below it. This Divine-human mercy which we are called to receive and use, and which has the power to evoke all that is best in those who are the recipients of it, is in direct contrast with that weak and weakening compassion, of which we have been thinking, which is the result of appeals to our emotions when or in so far as our wills are not braced by a Divine zeal for righteousness, or the coming of the kingdom of God.

The difference between true and false mercy in essence and effect is one which we ought to keep vividly before our minds, that we may understand the meaning of God's dealings with ourselves as well as the true way in which we are to deal with our fellow-men. Through lack of such knowledge people frequently misunderstand God and lose their faith in His goodness and love. This is, as a rule, when life goes hardly either with themselves or with those whom they love. They cannot understand why God should make life so hard for them, or why He does not answer their prayers as they desire.

A true understanding of God's mercy would enable them to see that because His mercy is perfect, He must desire not merely that we should 'have a good time' in this world, but that we should have such difficulties and trials as can evoke from us the maximum of effort, in the direction of faith, or endurance, or unselfishness and self-sacrificing love, or sympathy, or obedience, or whatever other virtues we specially lack. He must desire so to discipline our wills that we go not in our own way as of old, but in His Who is leading us, so far as we will let Him, to the fullness of life.[1]

When therefore Christ says to us 'Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful,' He means that our mercy is to be perfected by our hunger and thirst after righteousness—by the strength of our Father's own desire which He imparts to us by His Spirit, that all the people with whom we have

[1] It was because Robert Browning saw this and proclaimed it with such wonderful wealth of illustration, that he became by far the most stimulating of all the poets of our age.

to do should be raised to the perfection for which He created them. When it is thus fortified, then there is to be no limit whatever to the mercy we give to our fellow-men. No one whom we can reach is to be left outside the range of it. For all need mercy, even as we do ourselves: all people in this life come very far short of their ideal condition, and there is no power in existence except mercy which can raise them towards it.

The force of its might, which we can all of us put forth, is much greater than we can at first imagine. We discover it gradually as we put it forth. It has a power which makes for the healing of the souls of men analogous to that of X-rays in the hands of physicians and surgeons for the healing of their bodies. Mercy, like the psycho-analysts, cannot be content with a surface view of things, with seeing that people sin or suffer. It must penetrate beneath the surface, and must go on diving into the hidden depths till it has discovered not merely the proximate but the ultimate causes of the evil; that is, until it has discovered something from which the cure can begin. Our Lord 'knew what was in man,' because His mercy was unlimited and He could not be content till He did know. He gave Himself wholly for man's salvation, and therefore penetrated into the depths of human souls till He knew what ultimate appeal could effectively be made to sinners, when all other appeals had failed. It is this mercy that He desires to exercise here and now through us; for His appeal to the world is made now through the members of His Body.

It is plain therefore that the exercise of mercy must make great demands on our strength, spiritual, mental, and physical. But we can persevere in it courageously on account of the promise attached by our Lord to this Beatitude: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' As we strive to be merciful, to feel the sins and sorrows of others, to search for their causes that we may more effectually go to the rescue, we meet with much opposition from our own flesh; our effort, if it becomes habitual, tends to wear us out. But to us is the promise made sure—we shall obtain mercy; we shall receive from Christ day by day

fresh gifts of His mercy, according to our need. Yet these gifts are given always on the understanding that we are willing to suffer with our Lord increasingly as our power of mercy increases. And that we may overcome the natural shrinking we have from such increase of suffering, and endure it when it comes, a peculiar joy is attached to the exercise of mercy. You have all experienced it. It is the joy of discovering how to go to the rescue of the sinful and suffering effectually: it is a share in our Lord's own joy of knowing that He was enabled to be the Saviour of the world.

The joy itself cannot be described to those who have not experienced it, but some of its elements can be, for instance the following: As in our daily intercourse with men we exercise mercy through the power of Christ; as, that is, we strive to penetrate beneath the sins or faults of character that are visible on the surface to their root causes that lie hidden below it, we make wonderful discoveries. If we go deep enough, we frequently come upon unexpected reasons for peoples' sins or bad habits which oblige us to take a less severe view of them; and we almost always encounter virtues or beauty of character which had been hidden from us hitherto, but which we now see to be strong enough, if developed, to overcome and destroy the sins on account of which we began our search. We are conscious that we are arriving at the secret of their cure. We know what to intercede for, and how we can make an appeal to the people themselves through which a new link can be created between them and Christ. Of all joys that come to us through our intercourse with our fellow-men, there are none greater than the joy which is thus obtained.

Again, we obtain through such exercise of mercy the sense that we are sharing in and actually increasing the joy of our Lord Himself. And, above all, as this kind of experience accumulates, our hope increases for the ultimate salvation of all men. The clouds which envelop us, because of the sins of the world, begin to lift: the darkness becomes dispelled by light. For the cases in which sinful men and women have been put in the way of salvation through such

exercise of mercy as we have described become so numerous —is this not the experience of us all?—that it becomes almost impossible to imagine that anyone will ultimately be able to resist the full might of the mercy of Almighty God our Father. The exercise of mercy that we know of in this world is by sinful human beings: yet its results on all kinds of sinners are marvellous. There seems, even so far as our own experience goes, almost no limit to what mercy can accomplish for the salvation of sinners. What then will happen when the rest of men encounter in the next world the mercy of the perfected saints? And what when those who have resisted it all, come face to face with the infinite mercy of God Himself manifested to them directly, immediately, by Christ Jesus our Lord? As we ask these questions in the light of our own experience, our hearts overflow with joy. And we realize (do we not?) that it would be well worth while to suffer the loss of everything which our lower nature desires, if we could thus become more faithful and effective ministers of the mercy of Christ, who is Himself the effulgence of God's glory.

VI. PURITY OF HEART

The other virtues of the Christian character are all crowned and fulfilled by Purity of Heart.

The pure in heart are they who love God above all things, and therefore make it the object of their lives to do His will and accomplish His work. (See S. John iv. 34.)

Because this is the highest condition, our Lord has attached to it the highest reward, that a creature can attain to.

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' S. Matt. v. 8; cf. 1 S. John iii. 2 f.

The meaning of the word 'pure' (Gr. *καθαρὸς*) here can be gathered from its use in various other connections in the New Testament. Used of garments it means free from stain, unsoiled[1]; of water, clear, free from scum or sediment[2]; of metals, pure of dross[3]; in a levitical sense it

[1] S. Matt. xxvii. 59; Rev. xix. 8, 14.
[2] Heb. x. 22; cf. Ezek. xxxvi. 25.
[3] Rev. xxi. 18, 21.

is used of that which imparts no uncleanness or defilement ; [1] used ethically, it means free from corrupt desire or guilt, genuine, blameless ; [2] and so of the conscience, sincere, clear, not blinded by sin or falsehood.[3]

The ' pure in heart,' therefore, are they who are using their hearts as they were meant to be used, whose character is genuine, whose purpose is single. Our Lord's words, taken with the whole revelation of God's purpose for man which has been made to us through Him, can only mean that the perfectly pure in heart are they whose hearts are quite filled with love for God, which is free from any admixture of selfishness ; they who spend themselves to do His will, and have wholly conquered all temptations to do their own will when it is contrary to His. Such people possess the Christian character in its perfection, the character which is, as we said at the beginning, that of one who loves perfectly always.

Purity of heart then is at once the essence and the fulfilment of all the other virtues of the Christian character. The other virtues are only aspects or manifestations of this virtue, which is love in its perfection. No other virtue could be added to this, nor could the other virtues have any other source. For there can be no higher condition for any creature than to love God so perfectly that all he does or desires to do for himself or for others is done for God. To love thus is to live the life that God Himself lives, who sends His Word, in other words, gives Himself wholly, for the accomplishing of His own eternal purpose of love.

As we ponder over the meaning of purity of heart, it requires a very great exercise of faith to give us the assurance that we and our fellows can ever attain to the perfection of it. It seems plain to us that such perfection has never been attained on this side of the grave by anyone in the whole world but by Jesus Christ. All the greatest saints whose history we know, have confessed with one accord that they have come lamentably short of it, though they humbly hope

[1] Rom. xiv. 20 ; S. Luke xi. 41.
[2] Tit. i. 15 ; S. John xiii. 10 ; xv. 3 ; Jas. i. 27 ; Acts xviii. 6 ; xx. 26.
[3] 1 Tim. iii. 9 ; 2 Tim. i. 3.

to attain to it at last in the world to come through the power of Him whose story shows that He did attain to it in our nature, amid and even by means of the temptations and sufferings of His earthly life. S. John's report of our Lord's prayer on the night before His death contains these words: 'I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. . . . I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.' With this we must associate what He is reported to have said at the beginning of His ministry: 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work'; and His word on the cross, 'It is finished,' as 'he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.'[1] Whether or not we suppose that S. John is reporting the exact words which he remembered, the story of all the four Gospels assures us that they exactly represent the truth about Jesus, i.e. that He manifested on earth perfect purity of heart—the perfection of love unsullied by any admixture of selfishness. This is but another way of saying what S. John says in his epistle, that in and through Him 'the life was manifested . . . the eternal (life) which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.'[2]

The character of one who loves perfectly has once been manifested in our nature on earth. This fact which, if Christ were only a man, would be the most disheartening one we have ever heard of, becomes to us, since Christ is what He is, a sure ground of hope that we, who have been what we have been hitherto, shall be able by His power imparted to us to attain at last to perfect purity of heart—shall possess the character of God which our Lord has set before us as a goal to aim at.

But our immediate concern is with the purity of heart which we can and must hope to attain to in this life, the first fruits of which we are already conscious of possessing, through the mercy of God. It will help us to get a clear conception of what we are to aim at if we think of purity of heart as it is to be manifested in our various relationships with our fellow-men. Let us begin to do this by thinking

[1] S. John xvii. 4, 6; iv. 34; xix. 30. [2] 1 S. John i. 2.

of it as at once the essence and the fulfilment of the other virtues of the Christian character which Christ enumerates in the Beatitudes, taking them one by one. This will necessarily involve some repetition of what has gone before, but that will be serviceable for fixing the conception in our minds.

The relation of purity of heart to the other virtues of the Christian character.

Poverty of Spirit.—One who is poor in spirit relies on God for all the wisdom and strength that he needs. He may begin to do this because his reason convinces him that it is the only sensible thing to do—that he will be extremely foolish to rely merely on his own wisdom or strength, when he can obtain God's. But as he becomes, through his daily communion with God, more pure in heart, i.e. as his love for God overcomes his old selfishness, then his heart as well as his mind urges him to trust wholly to Him, until it becomes his 'meat'—a greater satisfaction to his nature than anything else is—to do God's will in God's way. This condition we can look forward to in our life on earth. At present perhaps we are laboriously seeking God's help, because we have sense enough to see that we cannot do anything that is worth doing without it; we are persevering in prayer, though there are many other things we would rather do. But we can be sure that persevering effort after closer communion with God will sooner or later result in this: that we shall delight to do His will, and shall therefore want to go to Him for help more than we desire to do anything else. Then we are 'pure in heart': we love God above all things, even though our love may still be mixed with a considerable amount of selfishness; we are in such a condition that if we persevere in it our selfishness must be at last wholly destroyed.

Again, we may strive after humility at first because we see that it is a beautiful virtue, and that when people put themselves forward, draw attention to themselves, or show by their words or actions that they consider themselves superior to others, their lack of humility spoils them and

makes them objectionable, however attractive their characters may be in other respects. But this only means that we are trying to be humble for our own sakes, because we want our characters to be, and to be considered by others, beautiful. But as we get into the habit of relying on God, the desire for the increase of His kingdom, i.e. pure love for Him, gradually grows stronger within us until it has overmastered that old selfishness ; the desire for His increase has become stronger than the desire for our own. It is with us as it was with John the Baptist. He no doubt had strong desires within him to be accounted a great prophet and to have a band of devoted disciples. But at last his desire for Christ's ' increase ' was so strong that it overmastered those desires, and he was content and even glad to be in the background : his joy was fulfilled when it became apparent that the result of his work was that his former disciples left him and attached themselves to Jesus.[1]

We can all look forward to being in a similar condition—of desiring God's purpose to be accomplished with such eager longing that we work and pray that people may be attracted to Him rather than to ourselves, that we may be like shafts of light which point men away from ourselves to Him. When this has become our abiding desire, then the end of our captivity is in sight, and our hearts can leap with joy because, however much selfishness still remains in us, we are on the road to freedom from the long bondage to self-love, which for years we had perhaps almost despaired of escaping from.

It is scarcely necessary to add that when once our love for God has become stronger than our love for ourselves, we have become ' poor in spirit ' in this sense also that we no longer desire more of this world's riches than are necessary for us ; it has become impossible for us to try to become rich at others' expense, or to think of ourselves otherwise than as stewards for God in respect of our possessions. The love of God in the hearts of men destroys covetousness as necessarily as light prevails over darkness. He who says he loves God and is still trying to heap up riches for himself at the expense of his neighbours, is a liar :

[1] S. John iii. 26–30.

he is one, as S. John points out, who says he loves God and hates his brother. 'Whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?'[1]

Mourning.—It follows from what was said on this subject that the mourning of those whom Christ pronounced blessed because they mourn, has both its origin and fulfilment in purity of heart. Mourning for our own sins and sorrows or for those of others, which is not caused by love for God, is not desirable in the citizens of the kingdom of heaven: it is no better than what S. Paul calls 'the sorrow of the world' which 'worketh death.'[2] Mourning for our own sins would spring from disappointment with ourselves and become a melancholy brooding over what we might have been, which would depress rather than help us to rise. Mourning for the sins of others would quickly become anger or irritation, which would hinder not help them. And mourning for sorrows, our own or those of others, if it did not spring from love, would inevitably result in rebellion of one kind or another against the scheme of things or in anger with its Author.

But as communion with God becomes closer, sins are seen to be deplorable hindrances to the fulfilment of His purposes of love: we see them as hideous barriers put up by sinners, ourselves or others, which prevent God from entering our hearts, and keep Him waiting sorrowfully outside. On the other hand, we see repentance as the demolishing of these barriers by the sinners who put them up, as that which gives to God the joy of being able to enter. Therefore we mourn for sins with a sorrow that drives us to repentance or to bring it about that others also may repent. Thus mourning which began through love is brought to its fulfilment by love, and so becomes a potent force for the destruction of sins.

Again, as love for God increases in our hearts, our sorrow for the sufferings of others becomes instinct with the healing and uplifting force of God's own compassion. We see the sufferings, moreover, however bad they may be, in God's

[1] 1 S. John iv. 20; iii. 17. [2] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

light, as means by which the characters of the sufferers can be purified, strengthened, and exalted, and therefore strive, especially by prayer, that this may be the issue of them.

Meekness.—So far as meekness means the suppression of anger it always tends to become weakness or indifference, or at best to remain a passive virtue, unless it is the outcome of love (*ἀγάπη*).

But as our hearts become filled with love for God, we see the people who cause injuries as God's children who are doing harm to others and therefore to Him. It then becomes impossible for us to cherish any personal resentment on account of the injuries they effect. However much we may be inclined to do so, we now possess an overmastering desire to win the people for God, so that instead of injuring His cause they may advance it. What would otherwise have issued in manifestations of anger now produces gentleness, long-suffering, kindness of heart in us, so that we strive in any way that seems best to transform the injurious into benefactors. If we are at present in a condition in which we only do this sometimes, or in cases of only certain kinds of injuries, we can look forward to the time, as we persevere in our efforts after communion with God, when it will have become habitual with us to love God so much more than we love ourselves that all feelings of resentment are overcome by our love : when with respect to anger also we have found the way of escape from our long-continued bondage, and have become free to bear adversity patiently, to forgive those who injure us, to pray for those who despitefully use us, and to strive that those who are injuring God's cause now may become His faithful servants.

Hunger and thirst after righteousness.—We dwelt upon the strange fact which has been exemplified over and over again in history and in our own experience, that a great zeal for righteousness may produce in us much hardness of heart towards those who are unrighteous, who do not attain or even try to attain to our standard of righteousness.

When this happens, then would-be reformers usually do more harm than good : they repel sinners from God rather than attract them to Him. But purity of heart—unselfish love for God which has been gained through close communion with Him—makes this impossible. We can all understand that that must be so. We ourselves in fact can only be hard on sinners when we forget what God has been to us. For our communion with Him has involved this experience, that God is to us a Father such as He is represented in the parable of the Prodigal Son. He has manifested Himself thus over and over again : when we have gone from Him, chosen other society instead of His, fallen into sins which we know He hates, or have even given way to forms of selfishness which hindered His cause and dishonoured His name, He has always waited for us, trying in every possible way to induce us to return to Him. And when we have begun to do so, He has at once met us, treating us as though we had never been away, welcoming us with the same loving kindness that He shows to those who have always lived as His faithful children. The love which is in our hearts for Him now, such as it is, has been created by His loving treatment of us. The desire for such righteousness as we are now striving to attain to, has been begotten in us by His gentle loving kindnesses. We look back over many years of life and perceive that He has been working without intermission for our good ; sometimes indeed in ways which we could not understand at the time, and which seemed hard to us, but which we know now to have been manifestations of His tender care and love, which could only thus have become effective for our welfare. We can think of no single sign of hardness of heart in all His dealings with us, however badly we may have treated Him. Our past lives show nothing but long vistas of the ways of His love—gentle, tender, forgiving, self-sacrificing love, which rebukes indeed and punishes and can bear to see us suffer if by that means we can best be purified—but always the love of Him who opens His whole heart to us and shows us that it makes all the difference to Him whether we live in union with Him or not.

This having been our experience of communion with God,

we have come to realize that His righteousness is nothing else than His love; that the kingdom of righteousness which He seeks to establish among men is a kingdom of love; that therefore it can only be increased by love; that anything like hardness of heart, which is the refusal to love, can never advance but must always hinder it.

A zeal for righteousness which is informed by love for God is indeed compatible with the exercise of stern discipline and the infliction of punishment. But it is never compatible with any attitude towards wilful sinners or those whose standard of righteousness is low, but that of our Divine Father who gives Himself to seek and to save that which is lost, and to raise to their highest possible condition all who believe in Him.

Mercy.—After what has been already said about mercy, it is scarcely necessary to point out that it needs to be perfected by purity of heart, or singlehearted love for God. For mercy, as we said, *is* love in a particular attitude or relation. Yet some repetition may be serviceable for impressing on our minds what is vitally important for our life on earth in all its relationships.

The exercise of mercy upon the various kinds of people we meet with, is often made extremely difficult for us on account of the fact that we find it almost impossible to feel any affection for many of those whom we are bound to love. We begin by realizing that we are in opposition to them. In some cases this sense of opposition is caused by their opinions, religious, political or social, with which we disagree. Others repel us by their bad manners, bad temper, or some other irritating characteristic; others because they plainly show that they feel in opposition to ourselves, or that they despise us or desire to thwart our efforts and spoil our work; others again because, though they obviously mean well, they rebuke us and point out our faults in irritating ways and so get on our nerves which are already perhaps overwrought by our work and the climate. Difficulties thus caused are often so great that nothing but a sincere love for God can enable us to overcome them.

But such love can enable us to do so in every case. The struggle to do it may sometimes be a very hard and protracted one, but victory is quite certain in the end if our love for God is increasing. Of this we must assure ourselves. There are to be no exceptions. For to love God is to desire what we know He desires ; and we know that He is seeking all these people whom we find so ' difficult,' and that He is giving Himself to them continually so that at last He may fill them with His life. That which makes it hard for us to get into union with them, so far as the fault is with them and not with ourselves, is some flaw of character which prevents the free flow into them of God's love also. Therefore our love for God as it becomes more sincere enables us to overcome the old selfish feelings by the strength of our desire to bring them, if possible, nearer to Him ; to go to the rescue, and do whatever we can to make it more possible for God to fulfil His holy will in them. And if we become conscious that the fault lies, wholly or partially, in some flaw in our own character, then we labour to get it mended that we may not fail God and frustrate His purpose of working through us.

The relation of purity of heart to mercy can be considered from another point of view. Mercy, strengthened by a strong desire for righteousness, can impel us with great force to go to people's rescue, and to go to the root of the matter, so that we aim at the cure not merely of the symptoms but of the disease itself. But, even because of its vehemence, it needs to be animated by a single-hearted love for God, which calms and tempers our own impulses and enables us to see people as He sees them instead of merely as we do. In our eagerness to help people to get to God, we are apt to fix our minds so exclusively on what they ought to be that we lose sight of their present condition. We are often so eager to apply what we have found to be effective remedies, that we do not consider whether the people are in a condition to receive such remedies at present or not. Thus our efforts may be not only unavailing but positively harmful.

But purity of heart, as we have defined it, gives us

insight, by forcing our minds away from ourselves to God and to those whom we desire to help. It thus enables us to see how much people can bear at present ; in what ways they can be appealed to now ; what their own consciences, not ours, are saying about that which we see to be wrong in them. Love for God gives us, according to our capacity, the long suffering, the tact, the gentleness, the clear sight and sure touch that our Lord manifested on earth in His dealings with all the different kinds of people with whom He was in direct contact. Hence, people who, like you, are continually engaged in works of mercy, have special need of close communion with God. Nothing else can give you the calmness, the considerateness, the wisdom, and the power to put yourselves in others' places which make such works effectual. Nothing else can enable you to stand the daily strain and difficulty of such works, and to renew your strength in spite of the constant demands that are being made on your mercy. Most of us can probably recollect times when we have tried to help people, even when it seemed that our only desire was to help them, and have made them worse—have hardened them and driven them further from the way to God, instead of helping them into it. Perhaps it was that we were tired, overburdened, or were trying to give out love when our own souls were empty. It need never happen again ; let us be sure of this. Many people may come to us with requests that we cannot grant, with ills for which we can find no immediate remedy, with questions that we cannot answer ; but if we are living in communion with God so that our hearts are filled with love for Him, at least to the extent that we love Him better than ourselves, all who come to us will be in contact with a stream of mercy which must, whether they realize it or not, make for their healing and salvation : they will have been brought through us into touch with God, even though at present they may not have the power to avail themselves of it.

We have now tried to see how purity of heart is the one animating source of all the separate virtues of the Christian character, and how it makes that character one and

simple—that of one who loves perfectly and in all circumstances.

In doing so we have caught a glimpse at least of the extent to which purity of heart can be attained by us in this world. Any such glimpse is of the utmost importance to us. For we are very slow to believe that God's promises made to us through Christ can be fulfilled in such people as we are. We aim low because we will not believe—cannot imagine—that we can become Christlike. Purity of heart is attainable in this life by all Christ's disciples who trust to His power instead of dwelling on their own weakness. It is possible for us all to love God now more than we love anything else. And we need to remind one another over and over again what the results of doing so inevitably are. On this account I propose, at the risk of wearying you by more repetition, to traverse again the same ground, regarding it from another point of sight, and to ask you to consider purity of heart in its relation to the three Evangelical Counsels as they are called, which are the subject of the three vows you Sisters take. With this reminder, however: that God in calling you to live under these special vows is but showing you the way by which *you* can best fulfil the life vows of poverty, chastity and obedience which Christians take in their Baptism; that the way by which He calls you to go is but the one by which He knows that *you* can most quickly arrive at that perfection to which He calls all His disciples, towards which others are led in other ways—the perfection which consists in the fulfilment of the two commandments of the new Covenant, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,' and 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' For 'there is none other commandment greater than these.'[1]

The relation of purity of heart to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience which are taken by Christians in their Baptism and in a special sense by members of Religious Communities.

(i) *Poverty.*—In our Baptism we renounced 'the vain

[1] S. Mark xii. 30, 31.

pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same.'

That implies as much as this, that we promised God not to seek for more of this world's goods than were necessary to enable us and those who depended on us to do our work as well as possible: or, if we found ourselves in possession of superfluous wealth which we had not sought for, that we would use the surplus, to the best of our ability, for the benefit of those who had not enough. You, because God has called you to be members of a special kind of Community formed for a special kind of work, take a vow of poverty which implies the surrender of all personal property, so that you may not call anything your own, or retain anything for your own use without permission. There are other kinds of societies of people who in somewhat similar manner find it best to pool their resources for some special object, not considering their possessions as merely their own.

Now it is quite possible to keep these vows of poverty strictly from other motives than love. People may give away large sums of money or all their superfluous wealth—even, as S. Paul says, 'all their goods to feed the poor'—from merely selfish motives, e.g. to get the praise of men, or to salve their consciences, or to procure for themselves an entrance into the kingdom of heaven after a life of selfishness; and yet, because they have not love, their giving 'profiteth nothing.' People may take the vow of poverty in a Religious Community for selfish motives: to save themselves the trouble of having to bother about money, or to gain merit or praise for themselves.

But purity of heart—sincere love for God—makes all voluntary poverty a blessed and life-giving thing. For, as we come to love God above ourselves, and to love our fellow-men for His sake, then it becomes impossible for us to seek superfluous riches for ourselves. We may, or may not, feel called to take a new and special vow of poverty, but the love that is within us obliges us, as it obliged Christ's first disciples, to consider our possessions not as merely our own, but as means by which we can help those who have not

sufficient.[1] Our wills become one with God's will in the matter. We desire to help others by giving them a share in our possessions much more than we desire to keep those possessions for ourselves. Our love for God has in this respect also delivered us from our old bondage; it has at last made covetousness hateful to us.

(ii) *Chastity*.—In our Baptism we renounced 'the carnal desires of the flesh,' so that we would not follow nor be led by them.

The meaning of this will not be clear unless we remember that we have here an echo of S. Paul's language. Our promise was not to renounce the desires of the flesh. For they are not bad but good desires, implanted in our nature that our lives may be preserved and our race increased. They are all good: sexual desires, though they cause more trouble than the rest, are as good and necessary as are our desires for food and drink. The expression 'carnal desires' has a different meaning. It is taken from S. Paul, e.g. Rom. viii. 5–14; 1 Cor. iii. 1–3, where 'carnal' is opposed to 'spiritual.' A carnal man is one who is under the dominion of his own flesh: he ought to be a spiritual man, or one who is under the dominion of the Spirit of God who acts upon his spirit. 'Carnal desires' are the desires of a carnal man. And therefore our Baptismal vow was a promise made to God that we would not live in accordance with the dictates of our own flesh, but in accordance with His will. We promised in fact that we would follow our Lord's example, who, when He was tempted to satisfy the good desires of His flesh in a way which He knew to be contrary to His Father's will, refused to do so.[2]

Most of the desires of our flesh, such as those for food, exercise, sleep, recreation, are normally meant to be attended to every day, that we may continue in life and be healthy: though in regard to them all we are meant to discipline ourselves, so that we do not run into any excess, but act in accordance with God's will as it is made known to us through our consciences.

[1] Acts iv. 32.

[2] S. Matt. iv. 2–4.

It is otherwise with our sexual desires. They are meant for the married state only, and are not to be allowed to have their normal fulfilment except by married people; and married people are to discipline themselves with respect to them also so that they do not run into excess, but act in accordance with God's will.

Because God is our loving Father, all the desires of our flesh are of such a kind that they not only tend towards the preservation of our life or the increase of our race, but also cause much joy to us through their fulfilment. God evidently wants us to enjoy life. The Apostle says that God 'giveth us richly all things to enjoy.'[1] He uses a strong word (εἰς ἀπόλαυσιν) which implies intense enjoyment,[2] but it is not too strong to describe the innocent joys that the ordinary processes of life bring to us when we are in health. Through these joys our temptations come. But herein also is our Father's love for us manifested, for thus the desires of our flesh become material for our victory. They are not meant to guide us as they guide animals, but we are to regulate them. They are to be under the control of the Spirit of God. We are to use them therefore, as the Prayer Book says with respect to marriage, not 'to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding, but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.'

So far as we let go of God's control, the desires of our flesh become for each of us what S. Paul describes as 'a different law,' i.e. different from the law of God 'in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.'[3] But so far as we live under the guidance of the Spirit of God, our natural desires are means through which our characters become strong, and our love for God pure and single-hearted. The meaning of our Baptismal vow thus becomes plain. We promised that we would 'not

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 17.

[2] It only occurs once more in N.T. in Heb. xi. 25, where it is used of the pleasures of sin.

[3] Rom. vii. 22, 23.

follow nor be led by ' the desires of the flesh, but would follow and be led by God.

The vow of chastity which you take as members of a special kind of Community ' involves the absolute surrender of the possibility of marriage, and the entire dedication of all the affections of the soul to Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church.' This does not mean that any of your affections are to be withdrawn from those who were the recipients of them, in order that they may be dedicated to Christ. But it means that your affections are not to be allowed to control you, but that you are to control and use them by the power and in accordance with the will of Christ, so that they may be used, not less than before, but in the fullest and most effective way.

Now it is possible to keep both the Baptismal and this ' Religious ' vow of chastity from other motives than the love of God. People may keep them strictly, e.g. from motives of self-respect, because they feel it to be degrading to be under the dominion of the flesh, or because they want to keep their bodies fit that they may be good athletes, or, in cases like yours, because they want to have the satisfaction of living ' the higher life ' (if, as so many do, they wrongly look upon the married life as in itself a lower one), or because they are aiming at a high place for themselves in the kingdom of heaven hereafter.

But those who have attained to purity of heart in the sense that they love God better than themselves, keep these vows for His sake. Gross forms of self-indulgence become impossible for them, because, however great their temptations may be—and the holiest people may be tempted in very gross ways—they cannot bear to defile their bodies which they regard as temples of the Holy Spirit. To do so by excessive eating or drinking or sexual indulgence is, they realize, to grieve and insult God. They are also on their guard lest their wills should be overcome by any indulgence of the desires of the flesh, however innocent, and therefore discipline themselves that there may be nothing to hinder them from doing God's will, when He makes it known to them in new ways. But, in addition to this, which may be

called the negative aspect of chastity, purity of heart enables us to use all the affections of the soul actively, strenuously for God's sake, and thereby to give them their highest exercise. In the first place the joy which comes to us through our affection for other people, and theirs for us, causes us to love God still more as we thank Him for it, and incites us to do what we can to bring nearer to Him those whom we specially love and as many others as possible, and thus to increase His joy who is constantly increasing ours. And in the next place our love for God enables us to overcome the selfishness that remains in our affections. We all desire intensely (unless our hearts have become hardened and cold) the affection of others. Since our nature was made to find its fulfilment in 'the communion of saints,' there is nothing wrong about this desire. But we are constantly tempted through it to make self the object of our life instead of God. No one is free from such temptation whose affections are strong. Members of Religious Communities like yours are as liable to it as anyone else, unless indeed, which may God forbid, their religion has a hardening effect on them. The temptation may take the form of jealousy or envy. We may be so fond of someone and so desirous of his love that we can scarcely bear that anyone else should have a share in it ; or we may be tempted to envy, and so be in opposition to, those who are receiving love which is not given to us. If the temptation appeared as plainly as it is here described, we should probably resist it strenuously : it would seem the extremity of selfishness to grudge other people the love they were given. But the temptation may be so subtle and may come in such a disguised form that it is extremely difficult to recognize it as temptation. It may come, e.g., through our work and the good love we have for the people we are working for, so that we want them all to ourselves and try and bring it about that others do not share that work with us. This is probably a very frequent and plausible temptation to Sisters who have no children of their own, and yet long to mother others' children and even grown-up people, and to feel they belong to themselves alone. It is impossible to enumerate all the subtle forms

this temptation may assume. It is so strong and persistent that very many people desiring to serve God faithfully have thought that they could only hope to do so if they deadened their affection for other people and withdrew their hearts even from those who were nearest and dearest to them. The effect of this false belief is felt among us to this day. But this would mean at best entering into life maimed, with hearts which were partially paralysed ; at worst, it would mean living for self to such an extent that we were not entering into life at all.

A single-hearted love for God enables us to overcome this temptation, so that all our affections become instinct with the Divine love, and therefore channels of that love to all those with whom our affections do or can bring us into union. The desire for the love of others remains, as it will remain for ever in all the members of the Body of Christ. But through our daily communion with God we can attain to an habitual desire which is stronger still—the desire that God's will should be done and His kingdom come : so that however much we may want people for ourselves, we desire still more that they should love Him. Our love for God has become the strongest thing in us. All our affections have far more force than before : we love more intensely those whom we loved before, and also much more purely. For now our love for them is a force which is exerted, not as it used to a large extent to be for ourselves, but for them—for their highest good—that they may be filled with God. Our love for them and for Him is one and the same.

This is indeed difficult to attain to. To keep the vow of poverty is comparatively an easy matter, hard though that is. But we are not to suppose that such a condition of 'chastity' is unattainable in this life. To do so is not humility but faithlessness. We can all attain to it if we persevere in our efforts after close daily communion with God, for that means being in direct contact with Him who *is* the perfection of love ; and as constant contact with any very loving person on earth can have wonderful effects in making us more loving, constant contact with God must

have a transforming effect on us, and especially on our affections; so that what was earthly or sensual in them is replaced by the love that is Divine.

In the hope of this let us seek for ever closer communion with God, and try to help others to gain it. Let us say to ourselves again and again that both we and they can attain to very high and holy fulfilment of our vow of chastity by means of it. The object of this vow is thus expressed in your Rule, and the words apply equally to you and those for whom you pray, 'The Sisters are called to this vow of Chastity not that they may love less, but that they may be able to love with His love all with whom He brings them into any kind of relationship.'

(iii) *Obedience.*—This is the most comprehensive and therefore the most difficult to fulfil of the three 'Counsels.' For all our possibilities for good or evil are in our wills. Our whole moral life consists in the choices that we make. Our wills are therefore the battle-field where the forces of good and evil contend for the mastery over us. But, as we pointed out before (in Part 1), that is not a complete statement of the case. For when we begin our conscious life our wills are not equally balanced between good and evil, so that it is as easy for us to make a good choice as a bad one. However the fact is to be accounted for, our wills 'by nature' incline strongly towards evil, so that it is much more difficult for us to do good, i.e. to live in obedience to what we know of God's will, than to do evil, i.e. to disobey Him. We all know well that if we allow children, for whose training and education we are responsible, merely to go their own way, we are most culpably encouraging or rather abandoning them to go wrong. We know equally well that if we allow ourselves, however advanced in age we may be, to be guided by our natural impulses—if we take the line of least resistance, and do not discipline our wills; if we do not habitually *deny ourselves* (to use our Lord's comprehensive phrase)—we become disobedient to God, and therefore less and less capable of the freedom of His service. However many good desires we have, if we have not 'learned obedience,' we

are not free to follow them : our wills are in bondage. There is a good deal of careless thought and language about the freedom of the will. It is often confused with our power of free choice, i.e. our freedom to act as we choose ; but the freedom of the will is a very different thing. Our wills can only be said to be free when we are able to act in accordance with the true law of our being. To take an old illustration : a railway engine is free only when it runs along the lines it was made for. If it gets off those lines, though it may make a great deal of noise and fuss, it cannot get on, cannot fulfil its purpose, its power is wasted. In like manner we were all created for a certain purpose—to go by God's way, to lead a life of self-giving love like His. So far as our wills are free, we live that kind of life : so far as we live for ourselves instead, our wills are not free. Freedom of the will is therefore freedom from the bondage of self-will, or self-love in which we all began our lives. To obtain that freedom is a lifelong task : it is the most difficult thing we have to do. It is true always that all our conscious acts are the result of our own choices. But the choices we make are those of a will which is either free to choose in accordance with God's will, and then our actions are virtuous and helpful to God and man, or they are those of a will which is still to a greater or less extent in bondage to selfishness, and therefore to that extent chooses what is contrary to God's will, and so does harm. It is sometimes said that holy people who choose to go by God's way because they greatly prefer that, are after all doing what they like to do, and are therefore just as selfish as the people who choose to go after their own lusts because they prefer that kind of life. But that is very foolish talk. It ought to be obvious to us all that the people who choose to go by God's way are the people who are fulfilling the purpose for which He made them ; that they can at last choose this only because they have fought a long fight against great odds, have been victorious and so have been delivered from terrible bondage, and that the people who still go after their lusts are bad, weak, captive people who have not fought long or strenuously enough to be victorious. When once we have come to

desire what God desires, then we are holy, Christlike; a wonderful victory has been achieved in and by us, through His power.

This leads us into the heart of our subject. What we all need is something which strengthens our wills to obey God instead of going our own way. So far as outward circumstances can help, we were given this first in our family life, in which we were trained to live in obedience to our parents: then in our school life, in which we could get used to doing not what we liked, but what we were told: then probably in work which we afterwards had to do in obedience to someone. And you at last felt yourselves called to live under obedience in this Community. Your Rule says 'Striving to follow His example who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, the Sisters bind themselves to Christ by a vow of Obedience, that being delivered from the deceitfulness and bondage of self-will, they may become willing instruments fitted for the accomplishment of His purposes.' This does not mean that you undertook anything more in the way of obedience than was included in the life-long Baptismal vow: for you, in common with other Christians, vowed then that you would 'obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life,' and that includes everything that God requires from you during your whole life. But this happens to be the way by which God desires to lead you into perfect obedience to His will, who leads others by other ways. Your 'Religious rule' therefore is the means God has chosen for you by which your wills may be not crushed but strengthened; by which you may get into such a habit of denying yourselves that you are ready to do whatever God tells you. God's purpose in putting us under any kind of rule is always that our wills may be strengthened by it to obey *Him*.

Consider then the relation of purity of heart to obedience. It is possible to live a life of obedience from other motives than love: e.g. men obey orders from a sense of duty, even when their judgement does not go along with them, and they would much rather not obey them. One of the most notable

instances of this in history is the obedience of the six hundred at Balaclava. Such obedience stirs our imagination always, and seems to us wholly admirable. So it usually is, so far as it goes. But there is obedience of a much higher kind still. When God commands us to love our neighbour as ourself, we cannot obey Him perfectly if we are animated only by a sense of duty. We can all realize this, because we no doubt have been ministered to in various ways by people who served us because they felt it was their duty to do so, and who would not have served us otherwise. There is all the difference between such service and that which is rendered by people who with all their hearts desire to do whatever they can for us. God's whole service for us is rendered in obedience to the law of His Being, which is love, not because it is due to us. Nothing could be due to us before we existed, yet God created us of His love.

Others might keep a vow of ' Religious obedience ' such as yours because it saved them the trouble of deciding things for themselves. Many people are of such an indolent temperament that they come to an adviser and say, That is my difficulty, I don't know what to do about it, but I will do anything you tell me to do. But that kind of obedience greatly weakens instead of strengthening peoples' wills. In such a case the adviser ought as a rule to refuse to make any decision. A Religious rule is greatly abused, not used, if it is considered as that which saves us trouble.

Again, there are people like the man of God who was sent to Bethel to rebuke Jeroboam,[1] who rendered obedience without love, and therefore, though he did nobly at first, was easily persuaded afterwards into disobedience. Such people, living under a rule like yours, might be enthusiastic and scrupulous about obedience at first; but afterwards, when it pressed upon them hardly, would probably find conscientious objections to certain rules or injunctions of their Superior, would persuade themselves they had private guidance which excused them from obedience, though in reality the only difficulty was that they very much wanted to go their own way.

[1] 1 Kings xiii.

The fact is that, to self-willed creatures like us, obedience which involves denying self is the most difficult duty of all ; and until our hearts are filled with the love of God, we eagerly jump at any excuse we can find for going our own way, and innumerable excuses are always being offered to us by our own minds, or by other people, or by evil spirits. But as our communion with God becomes closer and our love for Him increases, we overcome these difficulties. When once we have arrived at the condition of loving God more than ourselves, we are on the road to perfect freedom from the bondage of self-will. We obey God because we love Him, not merely because we feel it to be our duty or our wisdom. We welcome any kind of discipline which helps us to deny ourselves. We desire increasingly what God desires. However much we may still want lower things, we desire above all that His will may be done, and that we ourselves may become better instruments for doing it. We can look forward to the time even in this world when rules or any other forms of discipline—anything that ' turns earth's smoothness rough '—which used chiefly to make us want our own way more than ever, now are welcomed as means by which we can become more faithful and loving servants of God.

Hitherto we have thought of purity of heart as that which delivers us from the manifold bondage to the self-love which has hampered us all our lives, into ' the glorious freedom of the children of God ' [1]—the freedom to give ourselves wholeheartedly to the service of God and men. That in itself ought to be sufficient to stimulate us to gain it with at least as much eagerness as prisoners in German or Turkish prisons in the war strove to avail themselves of any way of escape that was offered to them. But there is much more to be said about purity of heart : our Lord said it when He pointed out its reward.

The pure in heart see God : in this world ' in a mirror darkly,' yet at least to the extent that He becomes the light of all their

[1] Rom. viii. 21 (Moffatt's trans.).

seeing, all people and things that they have knowledge of being seen in Him, illuminated by His splendour ; in the next world 'face to face' 'as He is.' (1 Cor. xiii. 12 ; 1 John iii. 2.)

'It is not yet made manifest what we shall be' when our souls are illuminated by what the Schoolmen called the light of glory, so that we can see God in His essence. We cannot in any way imagine what that blessed experience will be. But we can understand something of what our Lord's promise to the pure in heart may mean for them in this life, and we will confine our attention to that now.

If we make communion with God our chief aim, and devote our best energies to it, we can look forward to the time, if it has not yet arrived, when God will occupy the first place in our minds and hearts, so that we habitually regard people and events in the light of His eternal purpose of love. When we have reached such a condition, God's reward for the efforts we have made and still do make to maintain close communion with Him, are magnificent beyond anything we could have imagined beforehand. Light streams forth from Him into us that illuminates for us everything and everybody we are in contact with.

The pure in heart see God in Nature.—The common things they saw before are no longer the same : they see in them Divine beauty which has the effect of increasing their love to God and men. Not all visions of beauty do this. It depends altogether on the condition of heart of those who see them. Let us get our thought clear about this. Many people, like the boys who come to us here to be trained, do not see any beauty in Nature at all : they have never been taught to use the faculty they have for seeing it, and therefore beauty does not at present exist for them, the idea of it is not yet in their minds. And of all the multitudes whose faculty has been trained to see beauty in Nature, only the few gain from it a vision of God. Many see beauty which entrances them, but at the same time makes them more selfish or sensual than before : if their hearts are not pure, they see it by their own light which gives it a false glamour that hides rather than reveals God.

The pure in heart, however, see the truth of it, that is an emanation from God's love; and their hearts are stirred by it to more devotion to Him and to their fellow-men for His sake.

They see God also in the Art which reveals Him.—Not all art does this. But artists who see God in Nature can reveal His beauty by their art for the pure in heart to see, whatever may be the medium through which they work, whether painting or music or some other. Those who do not see God can reveal only the imaginations of their own hearts. Hence beautiful painting, or sculpture or music can be bad and have a bad effect on those who see or listen to it. The greater the skill of the artist the more harm his work does, if his heart is impure. But beautiful art of any kind which proceeds from and is received into pure hearts, reveals the truth of Nature and the glory of God so wonderfully that any one picture or piece of music might be the means of altering the whole trend of a person's life.

They see Him in the events of their own lives.—They have risen above the old dreary conception that God only took interest in what was called the religious part of our lives. He is to them the Divine Father, who is wholly interested in all that they do. They have the kind of trust in Him that little children have for parents who love them, to whom they go with all their joys or anxieties or sorrows, feeling quite confident that they will give them their whole attention and love, as if there were no other objects of it. Our Lord told His disciples that this was precisely the kind of trust that God desires from us.[1] And the pure in heart take Him at His word, and become more pure in heart every day by doing so. They therefore know what it is to live, as Christ said we ought to live, without anxiety: they cast all their anxiety upon Him, because they know He cares for them,[2] and thus have all their force available for the service of God and man day by day,

[1] See S. Matt. xi. 25–30; S. Mark x. 14 f., etc.
[2] 1 S. Peter v. 7.

without wasting it in vain regrets or anxious forebodings. God can guide people who thus trust to Him, show them the meaning of the things that happen to them, and teach them how they can fulfil His eternal purpose in and through these events, whether they appear small or great.

They see His hand in all new movements of nations or masses of men.—It has been said that we ought to read newspapers carefully to see what God is doing day by day. That is the point of view of the pure in heart. God is, they know, always at work that the kingdom of the world may become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. And as they live with Him and watch Him at work, they become aware of ways innumerable, such as used to escape their attention, in which He is bringing good out of evil, gradually drawing individuals and through them masses of men nearer to Himself, enabling them to understand more of His mind, to know the Truth. They see the Spirit of God fulfilling Christ's promise 'He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you.' [1] They see Him doing this in the present age on a far wider scale than ever before. They see Christ coming into His own, His principles being accepted and acted upon in nation after nation, where they used to be rejected even with scorn. And seeing all this and understanding the great new hope for the race which it points to, it becomes impossible for them not to give themselves wholeheartedly to God's service, and to work as instruments of His Spirit. How can they any longer give their chief attention to what are merely their own concerns? They must be in the movement, this new Divine movement which is being manifested over the world. They must march with Christ to His victory, whatever it costs them: they cannot stay behind merely to enjoy themselves. They who love Him must desire to share with Him in the travail, the wounds, the losses that the great fight entails: they cannot be

[1] S. John xvi. 14 f.

content to wrap themselves round with comfort in a small environment any more.

They see Him in the individuals with whom they are in contact.—We all see in the people we mix with what we are looking for. Some people appear to be perpetually on the look out for evil, for flaws in the characters of others ; they can easily find them : any fool can do that, but in doing it he lets poison into his mind to such an extent that the atmosphere which surrounds him becomes poisonous. The pure in heart, however, are habitually looking for God. In their intercourse with their fellow-men therefore they cannot stop at the evil they see in them. On the contrary, every flaw they see in others' characters becomes a challenge to them to go beyond it till they find goodness which shows the presence in them of God's Spirit, and the power by which their sins or weaknesses can be overcome. Your experience teaches you that such search is almost never made in vain. And therefore God's beauty and love and unwearied patience are being made manifest to you in ever new ways, day by day. No one can make it his habitual endeavour to find God in people without becoming aware that the glory of God—the glory of perfect self-sacrificing love at work unceasingly to bring good out of evil—is being flashed into his soul from all sides. 'The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom,' said the wise man. But an habitual search for goodness in the world brings us into direct contact with the eternal wisdom described of old before the Incarnation with wonderful prophetic insight as the 'breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty . . . an effulgence from everlasting light, and an unspotted mirror of the working of God' (which) 'passing into holy souls maketh men friends of God and prophets.' [1]

They see Him through direct communications of His Spirit.—What the author of Wisdom saw dimly, we understand much more clearly through the teaching of Christ and our own experience of His indwelling in us by His

[1] Wisdom vii. 25–27.

Spirit. God's Spirit in relation to us is God breathing Himself into us wherever He can find an opening into our hearts and minds. And the pure in heart are they who are habitually keeping their minds and hearts open to receive His inspirations. They are seeking God, as we said, everywhere, in the things that happen and in the people they meet. But in addition to this they cultivate the habit of listening for His voice. They are therefore in precisely that trustful, waiting attitude towards Him which enables Him to reveal Himself directly to them, as well as mediately through events and people. 'The Spirit himself,' says S. Paul, describing the experience of the pure in heart, 'beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with (him) that we may be also glorified with (him).' 'The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us. . . . And we know that to them that love God, God worketh all things with them for good.'[1] The eyes of their heart become enlightened that they may know what is the hope of God's calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints, i.e. the members of His Son, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe—that same power by which Christ in our nature was raised from the dead to God's right hand, far above all authority and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come.[2] They become 'strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth (of the power of God) and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.'[3]

Any attempt to give a summary description of the reward that God gives even in this life to the pure in heart must seem a dismal failure to him who makes it. Yet such an attempt ought to be made; for even the baldest description of the things that God has prepared for them

[1] Rom. viii. 16, 17, 26, 28 (R.V.M.).
[2] See Eph. i. 15–21.
[3] *Ibid.* iii. 18 f.

that love Him may help us to a new realization of what Christ meant by saying that the pure in heart shall see God. This reward, unlike most of those for which men labour, is of such a kind that even the contemplation of it lifts us above selfish considerations, and becomes one of the greatest inducements we can have to aim at a life of self-sacrificing love. The following is the least that can be said to enable us to see the reward God offers in one comprehensive vision.

Those who have attained in this life to love God more than they love themselves, see His glory surrounding them as an atmosphere in which they live and move. That is, they see His love at work everywhere to bring order out of chaos, beauty out of what is ugly or deformed, good out of evil. They see things, events, and persons in Him, so that all the life they know of appears as one whole. They see an inexhaustible supply of beauteous forms proceeding from Him, no two being alike, and that the force of His love is such that whatever other forces are at work to oppose Him, He triumphs in the end. Beyond this, the pure in heart are aware that His love is at work in all men unceasingly. They see Him penetrating to the depths of wickedness; rescuing men and women who were sunk in the mire and setting them among the princes of His people; transforming people into saints who were possessed of the devils of lust, or covetousness, or hatred, or malice; ever inspiring the disciples who believe in Him, that He may root out from them all evil growths of selfishness and fill them with His own love. They realize what He has been doing in their own lives since they began, and therefore that there is no limit to His love for all men. Hence it comes about that they cannot see any fallen men or women, however immersed they may appear to be in deliberate wickedness, without knowing of a certainty that their God and Father is pursuing each one of them with the whole force of His love, and that no amount of sin or rejection of Him on their part can make Him cease or even pause in His eager pursuit of them. They see Him winning His kingdom step by step, one army of foes after another

being brought under the dominion of His love. And they know that His love is Almighty; that there is no limit to its transforming power over all those who can be brought within the sphere of its influence.

But here their joy is dimmed by mourning. For they are aware that men and women on all sides of them are not being brought within the sphere of the influence of God's love who ought to be; that the great instrument which God fashioned for bringing men to Him is grievously out of order; that the Church of Christ is not one holy harmonious Body living by Christ's life and manifesting the Divine love as it was meant to be. And in particular they are aware that they themselves have failed God often and grievously, and have hidden from men the glory of His love rather than manifesting it to them. Therefore they rouse themselves—strain their eyes eagerly to see, keep their gaze fixed upon, the glory that God reveals to them by His Spirit—and then give themselves anew for His service, that they may enable those who are still in darkness and living for themselves to see the glory that will transform them.

PART III

The Effect of the Christian Character

I. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER MAKES PEACE

'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.'—S. Matt. v. 9.

Those who possess the Christian character are peacemakers, i.e. their influence necessarily tends towards the reconciliation of people with God and with one another. As 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,' so those in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells have their part in the same work of reconciliation (see 2 Cor. v. 17–20), and are acknowledged by God as 'blessed,' and as His true sons. Cf. Rom. viii. 14.

THE peacemakers our Lord speaks of are not such because they possess a quality in addition to those already enumerated in the Beatitudes. He did not say Blessed are 'the peaceable,' or 'the peaceful.' His description of the Christian character was completed: it culminated in purity of heart. And He then proceeded to describe the effects of this character when it is manifested in the world, both among the well- and the ill-disposed. Among the former it makes peace: the latter it incites to persecution.

Let us first consider how and why the Christian character makes peace. At the outset it is important to bear in mind the distinction our Lord draws between true and false peace. (See S. John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; cf. Col. iii. 15, etc.; contr. S. Matt. x. 34–36; S. Luke xii. 51–53.)

True peace, which is 'of God' and is to be found in Christ, implies for man fullness of life which, as we have

seen, is nothing else than fullness of love. To be at peace or to have peace means for us to be in union with God and one another. The ' communion of saints ' in its perfection is the ideal peace for God's rational creation. Hence to make this true peace is to bring people into union, or closer union, with God and one another, so that they live as ' one body in love,' i.e. in Christ. The false peace which Christ refused to give is that which deadens men's consciences and causes them to feel at ease when they ought to be fighting, to live contentedly in selfishness instead of striving after the service of love.

This being so, it follows that the most potent force for peace-making is love in act, or the manifestation of the Christian character in our dealings with one another. To bring men into union with God and one another it is necessary to behave to them as Christ behaves. Men can, it is true, resist this force in this world, but for all men of good-will—for all men, that is, who prefer goodness to evil when they see it—this force of the Christian character is practically irresistible. To illustrate the truth of this it is only necessary to bring before our minds the remarkable evidence of its truth which our own times are affording us.

Let us think, e.g., of what has been happening in the world of politics since the Great War ended. We have seen two spirits at work inspiring two opposite courses of policy. They can be called the Christian and the anti-Christian. The latter is based on the assumption that our own or our nation's interests are to be our primary consideration, and that those of the rest of the world are to be considered only in so far as they affect, or are likely to affect, our own. The former, or Christian course, is to make the interests of mankind in general, which are God's interests, our chief concern, and then to endeavour to make our own nation as serviceable as possible for the good of mankind. The one inclines politicians to be suspicious, to think the worst of other nations, and therefore disinclines them to take any forward step for the good of mankind until it appears quite certain that their own nation will not suffer for it. The other makes them ready, even eager, to make ventures, to

do whatever can be done to promote the welfare of mankind in general: in fact, to obey the precept 'Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.' In many of the international conferences which have been held lately, the anti-Christian spirit has, alas! been greatly in evidence, and has caused more disunion, suspicion, and bad feeling than there was before; while the Christian spirit has been conspicuous in all such efforts as have been made to form a workable League of Nations, and in the great Washington Conference.

We have only to present to our minds these two opposing spirits, with the resultant courses of policy, to see that the one tends directly to the retrogression and loss, the other to the progress, prosperity, happiness, and goodness of the whole family of mankind, and of the several nations of which it is composed. The spirit that tends to make nations suspicious of one another, and causes each to regard the rest as either actual or possible enemies who are, or soon may be, conspiring against their rights, is obviously an evil force making directly for destruction, depression of trade, division, enmity, war. Whereas, to take one instance only, the Washington Conference evoked a mighty outburst of enthusiasm and thanksgiving from most of the civilized world; and all who were not confirmed cynics or far gone in callous selfishness, felt that mankind as a whole had begun to live and function on a higher plane, and was on the road which led directly to prosperity, peace, happiness, as well as a wonderful advance in moral goodness. The fact that representatives of many nations could sit together with a view to discovering what was best not merely for their own, but for the nations of the world, evoked all that was best in us, begat in us a new sense of our unity with the rest of mankind, and afforded us a new vision of the human family as it was meant to be—a brotherhood of nations, each at work to contribute for the good of the rest what it is best fitted to contribute, and therefore prosperous, happy, and at peace as never before. However much that vision may have faded from men's minds since, it left no room for doubt, while we saw it, that man's true welfare and life was

to be gained through obedience to the principles of Christ: in other words, that the Christian character in action is the most potent force in existence for peace making, for bringing men into their true condition of union with one another and with God.

The sad quarrel between England and Ireland and its sequel affords a vivid illustration of the same truth. If we have not yet seen the end of the quarrel, we have seen how it can be ended and issue in peace. Till lately we could not get into union with one another, because each side thought chiefly of its own rights or interests, and was not willing to risk the loss of any of them by making concessions to the other side. But at last there was a manifestation of the Christian character on both sides, until each became convinced that the other was no longer playing for its own hand, but was honestly considering what was best for the Empire and for mankind in general. Hence the conferences which issued in the Peace Treaty. That Treaty was a wonderful triumph of Christ's principles, and if there were not in Ireland a third party which persistently disregards those principles, it would by this time have brought about peace, prosperity, and happiness to Ireland, and a bond of union between the two countries in which the age-long discord would be forgiven and disappear. There is every reason to hope that this will actually happen, when once the third party, small in number but still powerful for evil, is either converted or ceases to exist as a party.

The perennial war between capital and labour, as it is commonly called, is another, and in many respects the most vivid and instructive, case in point.

Hitherto it has usually been supposed that these two forces must be opposed to one another, because their interests are. The common view was, and to a large extent still is, that each side has the *right* to fight for its own. Even when it was seen to be unfair that employers should have things all their own way because the labourers were at their mercy, and trade unions were created to enable labourers to fight more successfully for their rights, it was still generally supposed that war between the two was

inevitable, and the best that could be done was to ensure that the two sides should fight on more equal terms. And at times of special stress strikes were considered a legitimate weapon for the one side to employ, lockouts for the other. But this perpetual strife has confessedly resulted in appalling damage to the interests of both sides and loss to mankind in general, not to speak of the resulting bitterness and ill-will which does so much to ruin men's souls and deprive them of the happiness and joy in life and work which would otherwise be theirs.

And, alas! most of the remedies which are proposed are still based on the assumption that men are, and will continue to be, ruled chiefly by considerations of self-interest, and therefore that the same struggle must continue. The Great War ought to have taught us that all such remedies must prove futile, and that what is needed is a change of mind from the old anti-Christian to the Christian standpoint. For that war, by reason of the swift and appalling destruction to life and property which it caused, stirred our imaginations and enabled us to realize that war is a symptom of madness, a disease of the human mind, and selfishness, a disease of the soul. We can see now that man goes to war not because it is natural to him to do so, but because his nature has become perverted. We are most of us ready to confess that it is a gross libel on man who has shown himself capable of such glorious heroism and self-sacrifice, to say that we cannot expect wars to cease. And if that is so with regard to military wars, so is it also in the case of the industrial wars, which are every year causing more destruction, material and spiritual, on earth than was caused by the five years of what we call the Great War. This is the new point of view we need: that the industrial strife need not continue; that men can live and work together in harmony, treat one another as Christians should, consider not how they can best secure their own rights, but how they can most effectively serve their fellow-men. Here we touch the root of this matter. We have become obsessed by the idea of the 'rights of property' to such an extent that we are not eager to consider any proposed remedies for

social evils which seem to interfere with such 'rights.' In former days men's right to property was considered to depend on the use they made of it for the benefit of the nation. In our days all property once gained is considered to carry with it the right of its owner to use it as he pleases, unless in so doing he openly breaks the law of the State. Yet it had become abundantly plain in the war that, in the case of a good deal of property, one might with as much show of reason speak of the rights of the property which has been amassed by burglars who are also murderers. Our whole conception of the rights of property has become distorted and false. Men's minds must be changed about it. For 'rights' we must substitute 'duties,' and try by precept and example to put before men the Christian view that their property, of whatever kind it is, involves the obligation to use it for the benefit of their fellow-men, and that in truth—in the sight of God—they have no 'right' to it at all unless they do this. Again, let us proclaim it as a gross libel on human nature to say that men will not rise to this ideal when their imaginations are stirred so that they can realize its necessity and beauty. In the war men of all classes did rise to it. High and low, rich and poor men worked in harmony and shared their goods. Rich men who had hitherto considered 'the rights of property' as an axiom for thought, were ready and glad to share all that came to them with their poorer fellow-soldiers. It became for them the natural thing to do. If it had been suggested to them that they had a right to keep for themselves the good things that were sent to them, they would have repudiated the suggestion as monstrous: they *knew* then that their property involved the obligation to share it with others who were in need, and they enjoyed it the more because they were able thus to use it. And if men could be brought to realize that a war just as dreadful and destructive is constantly going on, their view of their own property would change in like manner.

Now observe. If it did change; if the men on both sides in the industrial war manifested to one another the Christian character; if each side tried to render as much

service as possible to the other, instead of trying to get as much as possible out of them, there would be a vast increase in trade, in material prosperity, as well as in happiness and goodness in the world. Far more wealth, material and spiritual, would be produced. The present is the most wasteful system imaginable. Men's forces, which might all be used for the good of mankind, are now to a large extent squandered through selfishness or destroyed through the quarrels, hatreds, and war which the present system produces. The available evidence, if men will consider it without prejudice or fear, is seen to be more than sufficient to show that the Christian character makes for the wealth, the anti-Christian only for the 'illth' of mankind.

It was preached by the prophets of the Old Testament that God rewarded the people of Israel for their faithfulness to His laws by making them rich and prosperous in this life. The truth underlying this, though it was distorted by the Jews in various ways, is taught also in the New Testament and illustrated by our own experience. God evidently means man to enjoy his life in this world, and desires to evoke love from him through his enjoyment of the good gifts of His Father. The truth as taught by Christ and His Apostles comes to us indeed in a paradoxical form. On the one hand is the teaching which may be summed up in the text we quoted before, 'God giveth us richly all things to enjoy,'[1] and on the other, such teaching as 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,' 'whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it.'[2] Thus the teaching of Christ and His Apostles on this subject is that God desires men's lives to be full, that His gifts should be multiplied through men's use of them until there is enough to enable all men to enjoy such fullness of life as is suited to their differing capacities; but with the warning that enjoyment does not come to men through keeping for themselves what they get, but in using it in the service of God and their fellow-men.

Now all our experience, if it is carefully considered,

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 17. [2] S. Luke xii. 15; S. Mark viii. 35, etc.

shows us that this teaching is true. Think of what we have all learnt through our own intercourse with our fellow creatures. Whenever we have behaved to them in the spirit of Christ; whenever, that is, we have tried to give ourselves for their service instead of trying to make them serve us, we have, as we know, exerted a force which has extended our life by making them one with us. And if they have acted in the same way to us, then a union has been created which has led both us and them to greater fullness of life, to a more forceful and fruitful exertion of our powers, and to a new realization of the joy of living. Whereas in so far as we have exerted the opposite force—that of self-seeking—we have cut ourselves off from our fellows and thereby caused a diminution of our life.

A similar proof of the truth of Christ's teaching is afforded by the experience of the numerous co-operative societies, which are such in truth as well as name, that are now coming into existence. They show most convincingly that when men combine into societies, the members of which work for and believe in one another, their best powers are evoked, they produce fruit and gain such joy and fullness of life as those who work in the spirit of competition can never know. This is becoming so well understood that the old theories of Political Economy, which were based on the assumption that men did their best when their self-interest was most forcibly appealed to, are for the most part discredited, and some of the ablest financiers of the world are coming to see that nations and communities prosper the most (from their point of view) when they work in the spirit of love instead of selfishness; when, as we should say, they manifest the Christian character in their dealings with other nations or men. Social reformers also, whether professed Christians or not, are more and more coming to see that men are at their best when they live in obedience to the principles enunciated by Christ, and that if reforms are to be effected, the appeal must be made not to men's enlightened self-interest, but to that in them which approximates to the character of Christ—to their capacity for self-sacrifice on behalf of others.

Let us turn to another line of thought, parallel with our former ones—that of the peace of the Church militant here on earth, the unity of Christendom about which we all pray and think so much. We often wonder why the multitude of prayers that are continually offered for unity appear to have so little effect, why such hopeful and noble efforts after peace, as, e.g., that of the last Lambeth Conference, should prove so abortive. What is it, we ask, that still keeps the different Christian bodies apart when there seems so strong a desire on all sides that they should be one? What can make them one? It may be that, as a result of all the good efforts that have been made, Christians in general are coming near to the true answer to those questions, and that, when they have found it, progress towards peace will be much more rapid than hitherto. The answer which is usually given is that they are apart because they cannot agree as to what are the necessary truths of the Christian religion. Hence it is supposed that the best remedy, used always of course with prayer, is to have many conferences of theologians from the different Christian bodies, that the necessary agreement may be arrived at. It is generally taken for granted that there cannot be unity until it is arrived at, but that when it is, unity will be practically accomplished.

Now it is true that such conferences are extremely valuable, and that the more men of different bodies can be brought together to consider with charity and prayer what their various opinions are as to the teaching and will of Christ concerning His Church, the more likely they are to become one. But much more is necessary. Differences of theological opinion are not the main cause of the divisions of Christendom. They are rather to be considered as only a symptom of the disease which has to be cured; which disease, so long as it remains, would prevent Christians from being one even if they arrived at a general doctrinal agreement as to Christ's teaching. The true answer to our questions is that lack of Christian behaviour is what keeps Christians apart, and that the main remedy for our disunion is the manifestation of Christ's character in the dealings

of Christians with one another. It is not true that we do not live together in one body in love because of our differences of opinion. The converse is much nearer the truth. Differences of opinion, in cases where such differences are disastrous and not merely signs of life, persist mainly because we do not live together in one body in love. In a world like this, where it is so difficult for our minds to come at the truth, and where the best intentioned people may make bad mistakes with their minds as to God's Nature and Will, owing to bad teaching or environment, we can be sure that theological mistakes of sincere people can readily be corrected by God, and that they would for the most part be forgiven and remedied in His Church if that Church behaved as Christ's Body ought to behave to all its members. It is because it does not so behave, because of the extraordinary lack of charity which Christians show and have for ages shown towards those who differ from them in theological opinion, that mistaken opinions have so often led to the creation of bitter heretics, and so to the multiplicity of the different and warring Christian bodies which exist to-day, whose wasteful strife we all so much deplore. As in the case of social or national disunion, it is a change of spirit that we need, or rather that the Church, acting as the instrument of the Holy Spirit to lead its members into all the truth, should be guided wholly by that Spirit and drive out what remains within it of the spirit of ' the world.'

I venture to suggest a line of thought which may perhaps throw some fresh light on the main cause of the divisions of Christendom, and therefore on the direction in which to look for the remedy.

Let us carry our thoughts back to the period soon after the ' conversion ' of the Roman Empire, when the Church was endeavouring, in the face of doubts and denials, to define the truth about the Person of Christ, i.e. about the Incarnation of God—the period between A.D. 325 and 451. There is no reason to doubt that it was the Spirit of God who urged the Church to its task, and in the beginning, at any rate, inspired the means adopted for accomplishing it, i.e. to find out what had hitherto been held on the subject

in all parts of Christendom, and to state this as concisely as possible in definite terms, in the form of a 'Creed,' for the guidance chiefly of those whose duty it was to teach the faith of the Gospel. For this purpose Councils were formed of bishops from all parts of the Church, with other theologians to advise them.

To avoid possible misunderstanding let me state beforehand that the following criticism of the actions of these Councils refers only to their treatment of Christians described below as those 'who, however badly their minds were mistaken, were sincere followers of Christ and eager to know the truth,' as distinct from those who had such an heretical *spirit* that their presence in the Church was itself a cause of discord and disunion.

Now let us consider what ought to have happened at these Councils—what would have happened if their members had been wholly guided by the Spirit of Christ. The task before them was so difficult as to be obviously impossible apart from the direct guidance of that Spirit, which they accordingly sought. They had to attempt to describe in human language the ineffable union between God and man which was effected by the Incarnation, to define the manner of that which necessarily far surpasses all human understanding. They could only hope to do this in so far as they surrendered themselves to the influence of the Divine Spirit of love. Should they not therefore have carried on their discussions with the utmost patience, gentleness, and loving forbearance, with belief in one another, and much zeal for the triumph of the truth of God as distinct from that of their own opinions? And when at last they had arrived at decisions which commended themselves to the majority, they should have hesitated to adopt them so long as there was any considerable body of opinion on the other side. They should rather have waited, postponed the Council for a time, to give all its members ampler opportunity for seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit and strength from Christ. And if, when all had been done that the spirit of love could devise, it still seemed impossible to arrive at definitions which satisfied all, and the Councils felt that they

must come to some decision, the minority who differed from it should still have been treated with the utmost love and courtesy. It might have been felt impossible for them to continue in their offices as official teachers of the Church, but they should at least have been lovingly exhorted to continue as members of the one Body, feeding on Christ in His Sacrament with the rest as before, in the sure belief that Christ would thus be best able to guide them out of their mistakes, if such they were, and to show the rest of the Church what amount of truth there was in the opinions they were contending for. It ought not to have appeared right to those who were specially appointed representatives of the Good Shepherd to drive them away, to cut them off from the main source of the strength they so greatly needed, unless and until they themselves had refused to live any longer as loving members of the one Body, or had become a source of danger to the Body through their evil lives; who were in fact such enemies of the truth as are described in the New Testament.[1] In which case the Church would no doubt have been right, as the Apostles said, to separate them for a time from its communion, with a view to their repentance and return. It should, however, never have meted out this dreadful punishment to any who, however badly their minds were mistaken, were sincere followers of Christ and eager to know the truth. All such people it should have endeavoured to keep as closely as possible in communion with Christ, who is the Light of the world and the Bread of life, the one only perfect source of the truth for all men.

When we turn to the history of the Councils, we find that they did follow such a Christian course as has been outlined to some extent, but, alas! only to some extent. It is plain that in almost every Council as the discussions proceeded another spirit made its influence felt, warring against the Spirit of Christ. It produced angry debate, the bitter and unchristian terms which opponents used of one

[1] E.g., in Acts xx. 29f; Rom. xvi. 18; Gal. i. 7–9; iv. 17; vi. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 6; 1 Cor. xvi. 22; 2 Tim. ii. 17; Tit. iii. 10 (R.V.M.); 2 S. John 9–11.

another, the disgraceful methods, frequently accompanied by physical force, by which the different parties strove to gain triumph for themselves, and the cursings and excommunications which the triumphant ones employed against their defeated opponents. If the Councils had been composed of the representatives of warring nations trying to agree upon terms of peace, we should have to say that their methods of procedure were not only disgraceful, but so foolish as entirely to defeat their own ends. Because they were composed of the Fathers of the Churcth, Chris's specially appointed representatives, we can only say that they had allowed the Spirit of Christ within them to be overruled by the evil spirit of the world to such an extent that it is no wonder that an evil tradition was begun by them which bore terrible fruits of evil in subsequent generations and created divisions, hatred, and confusion instead of peace and love.

To this we can trace, as their source, not only the immediate divisions into which the Church, hitherto one body, was rent when the Councils were over; but also the persecution and execution of 'heretics' in succeeding ages, as if they were the worst kind of sinners, however sincerely they may have believed they were teaching the truth; the fact that learned and even saintly theologians defended such practices[1]; their consequent persistence through so many generations; all the worst abominations of the Inquisition, and the frequent religious wars which have disgraced Christendom.

Ought not the Church of our age, earnestly striving that the divisions of Christendom may be healed, to bear in mind the conclusion to which the history of the past points, that the Church itself is largely responsible for these divisions; that they were caused at first chiefly, not because men held false opinions, but because when they held them, sincerely believing them to be true, they were treated in such a bitter, hostile, and unchristian way that what was worst in them was evoked in defence of their false opinions; whereas they might have been enabled, if they had been

[1] See especially S. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II–II. xi. 3; x. 3.

dealt with in accordance with the Spirit of Christ, to see how far they were mistaken, just as the rest of the Church might have been enabled to see what amount of truth there was in the new opinions they were advancing ? [1] It is not that we are to be less zealous about the Truth than our forefathers, nor to be less sure that right beliefs are of prime importance for producing right conduct. To say that it does not much matter what men believe, so long as they do their best to live good lives, is sheer nonsense. It would be just as reasonable to say of modern armies that it does not much matter what they know about the science of war so long as they do their best and fight bravely. For our spiritual warfare we need all the truth we can gain, and need it desperately. ' Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ' is Christ's promise to those who trust in Him. We are by no means to think that the Church can become one in Christ if we can hit upon some attenuated creed that Christians in general can at once agree upon ; if we are content with what Dr. Newman described as ' that residuum of Christianity which no one has any objection to.'

On the contrary, the Church's attempt should be to combine all the different aspects of the truth that different bodies have seen, so that the united Church we long for may be equipped for its warfare with all the fullness of the one truth of God that it is possible for the Church on earth to attain to.

For this it is supremely necessary that the different Christian bodies should set to work to cast out whatever remains in them of the evil spirit of ' the world ' of which we have been thinking. We can thank God that in our age, as compared with many previous ages, this spirit has been to a large extent exorcized. But this should make us all the more eager to drive out what remains of it, and to keep our minds open and alert lest custom or the blind following of traditions of the Church which are evil, but which appear

[1] The case of Nestorius and the Council of Ephesus is one of the most instructive illustrations of this to be found in Church History, see e.g., Dr. Bright, *Age of the Fathers*, vol. II. ccxxxvi.–xli.

to be sanctioned if not sanctified by long use, should prevent us from realizing to what extent it is still in operation. We ought to consider carefully what evidences still remain of the presence of this evil spirit within the Church. And when we do so, we cannot but be struck by the strange fact that differences of theological opinion which exist among Christians to-day, even when it is plain that those who differ are all sincere seekers after the truth, separate them from one another far more than do the deliberate sins of those who are rejecting the light they have. The members of Christ's Church are much more ready to forgive all kinds of sin and to believe in the sinners than they are to deal lovingly with sincere people whose religious opinions they consider false or inadequate. It seems therefore to be our duty to consider carefully whether or in what respects we ourselves or our Church are thinking of or behaving to those who differ from us in their theological opinions otherwise than Christ's Spirit permits. It is not for us to take the law into our own hands or to attempt short cuts to unity on our own authority. But it is for us to do what we can to create a right public opinion in the Church, and to do our utmost that the Church as a whole may allow itself to be guided solely by the Spirit of Christ in this matter.

There is one paramount consideration which must guide us as we try to discover what the right, i.e. the Christian attitude is towards those who unwittingly err from the truth or are haltingly advancing in pursuit of it. God *is* the Truth and God is Love. Hence men are to be guided into the truth by the Spirit and methods of love alone.

Now it is true that love is compatible with, even necessitates, the exercise of stern discipline and the infliction of very severe punishment on those who have not yet become capable of responding to any higher appeal. But it is not compatible with the treatment of sincere followers of Christ as if they were insincere; it cannot reject those whom Christ receives, nor account them as opposed to Him whom He owns and uses as His servants; it cannot call good evil. 'Love suffereth long and is kind,' 'taketh not account of evil,' i.e. thinks the best, not the worst, of people, 'believeth

all things, hopeth all things.' And Christ has given us a perfect example of what love is in act, that of the Good Shepherd who bears gently and lovingly with those who are out of the way, goes after them, gives Himself to them, draws them near to Himself, and thus leads them into the right way.[1]

Let us bring before our minds an imaginary vision.

Suppose that the whole body of Christ's Church on earth did become filled with His Spirit. Then there would be on earth a vast body of Christians, not by any means all agreed as yet as to the beliefs they held, still divided, it might be, on that account into various sections ; yet a body which was ' of one heart and soul,' each part of which believed in the rest and did its best to supply what other parts needed—a body all the members of which encouraged and lovingly assisted one another to feed on Christ and so to gain from Him the light of truth we all need and the power to follow it. Who of us can doubt that the Christian Church on earth, if it lived thus as ' one body in love,' would quickly progress towards the condition in which it was not only of one heart and soul but also of such oneness of mind as to the ' one truth ' as is desirable ; while different schools or sections within it were reaching forth in ever new directions, making ventures to discover for the whole body what the one truth included and implied ?

Nothing that we now know of the Church on earth, divided, torn by dissensions, wasting its strength in internal strife, can enable us adequately to imagine how quickly such a loving body as we have pictured could be led by the Spirit of Christ into all the truth.

We have now followed several different lines of evidence, and have tried to see how they all point to the same

[1] Since the above was written, Dr. Gore's book, *Belief in Christ*, has come out to us. On p. 314f he lays stress on both sides of the matter discussed above, the very grave scandal which the bitterness of doctrinal controversy has caused in the Church, and, on the other hand, the fundamental necessity of holding the *truth* of Christ if we are to follow His *way*. I gratefully welcome from such a theologian this confirmation of what I have tried to say.

conclusion: that the Christian character is the one paramount force whereby peace—fullness of life—comes to men. Whatever other instances we might take of the behaviour of men or nations one to another, the conclusion would be the same. It is quite safe to say this, not only because we have never experienced or heard of any evidence that points to the opposite conclusion, but because God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier has laid down in the plainest possible terms what is the true law of life for man. He must love God with all his force, and his neighbour as himself, if he desires to 'live.' So far as he gives himself in the service of others, he partakes of life more abundantly: so far as he lives for himself, he loses life. For all individuals, classes of men, nations, and for mankind in general 'the communion of saints' is the only true ideal—that fellowship with God and his fellows in which man's highest powers can be fully evoked, so that he partakes of *life* human and Divine to the uttermost extent of his capacity.

II. THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER EVOKES PERSECUTION

Those who possess Christ's character will in this life meet with persecution, as Christ Himself did.

See S. John xv. 20 ; xvi. 33 ; 2 Tim. iii. 12 ; 1 S. Pet. iv. 14–16.

Christ pronounces them 'blessed,' not because they are persecuted, but because they manifest that character which in this world necessarily provokes hostility.

S. Matt. v. 10–12 ; cf. x. 34–36 ; xxi. 35 f.; S. Luke xii. 51–53 ; S. John vii. 7. See also Wisd. ii. 12–20.

The Christian character provokes hostility chiefly in ungodly and deliberately sinful men. This is so because it is the character of one who loves perfectly, and therefore necessarily stirs up enmity in those who are deliberately pursuing selfish courses. Its effect on them is described in the above passage in Wisdom. But what is said there has greatly increased force when 'the righteous man' is a member of Christ who possesses and manifests His

righteousness, the strength and beauty of which was never seen or even imagined till He came. It has on the wicked an effect similar to that which S. Paul says 'the law' had on those who were once 'alive,' e.g. living in sinful enjoyment without pangs of conscience, apart from it.[1] It acts like a sharp sword: it strikes and wounds them. They can no longer go on in their selfish courses in peace after they have seen it. Hence they hate it, and are stirred into active opposition to it, i.e. to those who manifest it. They would get rid of them out of their sight if they could. When this is impossible, they seek to discredit them, to warn men against them, to bring them into contempt, by speaking evil of them or casting them out of their society; or they try to array against them the powers that be, by accusing them of speaking or acting 'against Cæsar,' of trying to upset the established order of society or government.

It is, however, to be observed that the Christian character produces this effect on its way to victory. The persecution it meets with is an indication that it is beginning to triumph. The fact that it makes men uncomfortable who were formerly in peace, that it disturbs them to such a degree that they are roused to hate and persecute those who manifest it, is a good sign. So long as men can go on in sinful, selfish courses undisturbed, there are no hopeful signs about them: they have not yet seen any vision which has quickened their consciences. But as soon as Christ's life of love, manifested in His disciples, begins to do this, there is good reason to believe that their salvation draws nigh. That is why Christ said to His faithful disciples 'Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' Rejoice, that is, not because you are persecuted and men are behaving as your enemies, but because their consciences are showing the first indications of that life which will one day fill them and overcome their evil.

[1] Rom. vii. 7–13.

We who profess to follow Christ can live among sinful men without producing any such results, or we can produce results which resemble these without manifesting Christ's character. We can, that is, be Christians in name but with hearts that are not burning with love for men or desire for the coming of Christ's kingdom, in which case we may perhaps stir up no opposition at all; or we can provoke men into hostility by our hard words or judgements, by being busybodies in other men's matters, or by manifesting unchristian behaviour in other ways, in which case we cause enmity which need never have existed, and retard the advance of the kingdom of God.

Therefore, while we constantly bear in mind our Lord's warning 'Woe (unto you) when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets,'[1] we are not to rejoice or congratulate ourselves merely because we meet with opposition or persecution. Christian history abounds with instances of individuals and religious communities who have evoked much enmity and hatred, and have become a grave source of scandal, by reason of their hard, unchristian behaviour, or the evil methods by which they have sought to advance the kingdom of God; but who have congratulated themselves because they were enduring the sufferings which our Lord said His faithful disciples would have to bear.

The genuine Christian character always makes for peace —for the union of men with God and one another—though this peace may have to be gained through war. Hence, when such suffering falls upon us, we must at once seek closer communion with Christ, so that it may be always love that we manifest, that we may never 'put men off' by want of love. The false rejoicing of which we have spoken can always be detected, if we analyse it, in that its source is selfishness and not that strong desire for the salvation of men and the coming of Christ's kingdom which union with Him must always produce.

The kind of persecution that Christ's servants may expect to meet with varies in each age and country. In India

[1] S. Luke vi. 26; cf. S. John xv. 19.

to-day the Christian Church may meet with the same kind of open, violent opposition before long which produced the frequent martyrdoms of the earlier ages. And this might be a genuine cause for rejoicing, both because Christians would be tested by it, as gold in the fire, and also because it would mean that the peoples of India were beginning to see that the Christian character was ' of disservice ' to them, ' contrary to their works,' ' a reproof to them '—that they were beginning to appear in face of it ' as base metal ' and their ways as ' uncleannesses.' At present there is not enough Christianity in the land to produce much opposition. Hindus are only beginning in a very few places to be afraid of it. There is not as yet much cause for that rejoicing in the face of persecution of which our Lord spoke. The Church in China, Japan, or Central Africa has much greater reason than we in India have for thanksgiving and joy because Christ's character has begun to stir the ' lump ' of indifference, to produce such enmity and persecution as can be expected to issue at last in the acceptance by their peoples of the new Life. This should give us pause, should make us consider whether the character that Christ's Church in India manifests is the genuine one, or to what extent it has in it characteristics that are the opposite of His, which rob it of its force.

If we bear in mind our Lord's analysis of the Christian character, on which we have dwelt at length, it is not difficult to understand why it must of necessity provoke opposition in such a world as this, and why we are right to be disquieted when it does not do so. The poverty of spirit of which our Lord spoke inevitably produces scorn and hostility in those who are overcome by pride or are making it the main object of their lives to heap up riches. Mourning such as that of our Lord for the woes of men must produce ridicule and active opposition in those who are careless of the suffering they inflict that they may gain their own selfish ends. The meekness and gentleness of Christ and of His true followers necessarily evokes contempt and anger in harsh or arrogant or unforgiving people, or in those who believe that the ends of good government are to be gained

chiefly by physical force. The true Christian passion for justice and uprightness must provoke to opposition, as it puts to shame, those who are unjust or are deliberately going by crooked ways for the sake of gain. Mercy seen in action necessarily rebukes, and therefore rouses to anger, cruel people or those who want vengeance for wrong done to them. Purity of heart, the crowning glory of the Christian character, must greatly disturb and wound, when they see it, those who desire to go on in impurity or those who are living solely for what this world has to offer, and therefore want to be free from all idea of the vision of God.

But, let us repeat, all such opposition as is thus produced in ungodly or deliberately sinful people, is a hopeful sign, a cause therefore for rejoicing. The main thing to be feared concerning such people is lest they should go on without being disturbed. We are right in believing that any active or violent opposition which is evoked from them by the sight of Christ's life is an indication that His leaven is at work in them, and that the disturbance we see or suffer from is the beginning of the process whereby the whole lump is to be leavened at last.

But the Christian character meets with opposition not only at the hands of men who are deliberately sinful, but also from those who, though otherwise good, do not as yet see what the pure in heart can see of God's ways or purposes for their own generation.

In every age God reveals Himself chiefly to those who are living in the closest union with Him. He can speak to them of the 'many things' He has to say to the world of men, which the rest cannot hear. Abuses which the Christian Church has hitherto condoned, or even advocated, are thus exposed that they may be done away. Religious abuses or superstitions, social abuses, inequalities of treatment or consideration among men, which have hitherto been considered right or inevitable, are shown up as contrary to the mind of Christ, as terrible hindrances to the advancement of the kingdom of God, and therefore of mankind, through the few who live close to God. As in the case of

scientific truth, so also is it with regard to moral and spiritual truths: they are revealed to the many through the few.

But especially in the matter of moral, religious, and spiritual truth, those few inevitably meet with much opposition and even persecution as they try to proclaim the new things Christ has made known to them. We need not be surprised at this. All the new truths, or rather the fresh implications of *the* truth that Christ reveals to men, are concerning love and the ways of love—new manifestations of 'how love might be, hath been indeed, and is.' And the members of our race, which is far gone in selfishness, are not only very slow to realize what love implies, but are readily roused into opposition when new revelations of it are made to them. For all new knowledge concerning self-sacrificing love which comes to us rebukes our selfishness and is contrary to our self-interests, to what we have considered our rights. Most men are not therefore ready to receive it: they would at first much rather it was not true: they are inclined to oppose, even violently, those who say it is true. It does not, as in the former cases we were considering, produce in them a sense of sin, for it had not hitherto occurred to them that they were not doing God's will in the matters for which they are now rebuked. The old customs, traditions, ways of living in which they had hitherto been at peace, seem to them good, not evil. They are therefore 'righteously indignant' when new men with new doctrines arise and exhort them to abandon the 'good old ways.' Thus it is that the true prophets of God in every age meet with hostility and persecution of one kind or another even at the hands of men of good-will.

For instance, Wilberforce and all those who saw what the majority of Christians did not then see, that slavery was wholly contrary to the mind of Christ, and that it could be, and ought to be, at once abolished, met with very great opposition, abuse, and persecution at the hands not only of wicked men who desired gain at any cost, but also of men of good-will, who had always been accustomed to the idea of slavery and could not believe that in condoning

it they had been doing what was contrary to the will of God. The extent to which custom can blind good men and incapacitate them from recognizing the ways of love when they are pointed out, has scarcely ever been so vividly illustrated as by the fact that the Anglican bishops in the House of Lords voted solidly against the abolition of slavery when it was first proposed.

Ruskin the prophet, when he ventured in 'Unto this Last' to oppose and show up the unchristian doctrines of the older Political Economists, was ridiculed, violently abused, and despised as a fool who had left his own proper business to write about matters of which he knew nothing. Yet now, as the doctrines he opposed are being abandoned, it is plain that he saw, what the majority of even good men did not then see, that those old doctrines were contrary to the ways of love, of God, and therefore made for the retrogression not the advance of mankind.

Mr. Gladstone, when he brought in his Home Rule Bills to do justice to Ireland and therefore as necessary steps for creating peace and good-will between the two races, was reviled and hated and persecuted more than any other statesman of our time has been by upright men, many of whom were formerly his colleagues and close friends. He was despised and rejected as insincere, a traitor to his country, a fool, or even as a madman. And yet we most of us realize now that he saw the truth—God's way of love—which most men then did not see, which, if they had seen, the bitter hatred, strife and murderous warfare that we have so long deplored, might have been avoided.

The same is to be said of Cobden, Bright, and their colleagues who preached Free Trade as being in accordance with the will of God, and therefore for the great advancement of mankind, when the majority even of good and wise men did not, as they do now, believe in it.

The list might be almost indefinitely extended: we can all add instances to it for ourselves. Such instances afford abundant proof that mankind advances in Christianity, towards the complete union with God and one another that is to be, through the few who see what the many do not see

of God's will and His ways and purposes of love ; and that, as they try to proclaim what God has shown them, they meet with hostility and persecution, and illustrate the truth that ' through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God '[1]—that as Christ Himself did, so we His disciples must learn what obedience to God implies through the things which we suffer.[2] If the true prophets of God in each age can endure through the evil times which come to them, their fresh visions will in time become public property, and the Church and the race will have taken a new step forward.

A conclusion which we ought all to draw from this is that we must never reject the counsels of good, sincere men who advocate new ways either for Church or State, merely on account of the fact that they are new, or are in opposition to old customs, traditions, ways of thought or habits of living which have hitherto prevailed in the Church and among good men ; that we must not pronounce them to be contrary to God's will until they have been very carefully examined in the light of the New Testament and the all-embracing doctrine taught there that God is Love : lest haply, while we are zealous for what we suppose to be the truth, we shall be found to have been fighting against God.

[1] Acts xiv. 22. [2] See Heb. v. 8.

Conclusion

What is necessary that the Christian Character may become more completely our own.

In the first place, it is necessary that our minds should be established in the truth which we have dwelt upon at length, that the character of Christ is not only the supremely beautiful one, but that it is the only force by which all men can attain to their true life. Have we yet arrived so far, or is more correspondence on our part with the inspirations of God's Spirit necessary before we do? The Christian character is in so many respects contrary to that to which we naturally incline, that there is need of continuous effort as we read and think and pray, in order that the realization of its supreme beauty and power may become our abiding possession.

When we have arrived at this knowledge, then, if we are in earnest, it becomes our chief aim that we and other men should attain to this character: like S. Paul we 'press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high, or upward, calling of God in Christ Jesus.'[1] And then the question becomes insistent for us, How are we to attain to it? We all believe that God is at work with His whole force that we may so attain, that He devises every possible means of grace, and provides the opportunities we need for the use of that grace when we have received it, in order that in all our dealings with Him and our fellow-men we may become wholly Christian. But we are all aware that a great deal is necessary on our part, and much more than we have ever yet given, if we are to become like our Lord. Leaving it all to God is

[1] Phil. iii. 14.

not the result of faith, but of indolence. God is the Sower, let us again remind ourselves, and we are living soil in which His seed produces its own proper fruits only according as we co-operate with Him. In what ways are we to do this? Let this be our concluding consideration. The first and most obvious answer is, by striving to live in closer communion with Christ. This we dwelt upon when we were thinking of the foundation of the Christian character. There is no need to repeat what was said there, though we do need to remind ourselves frequently that as 'love is of God,' Christ's character is 'of Christ,' and can only become ours in so far as we live in and by Him. But there is more to be added. You, for instance, have been seeking close communion with our Lord for many years. No doubt you accuse yourselves of much unfaithfulness in regard to this, and confess that your efforts have been desultory and poor rather than continuous and wholehearted. Nevertheless, you may be sure that He who thinks the best of us has rewarded your efforts, such as they have been, by imparting to you of His own fullness a very great deal more power than you have ever used. And it is safe to say that the main reason why you have not used it is that you did not believe you had it, and could not imagine that Christ could produce in *you* the wonderful effects He desires. That which more than anything else prevents Christ's disciples from becoming like Him, and from doing the 'greater works' which He said they would be able to do, is that they cannot imagine it is possible. And indeed, apart from the Gospel, it does exceed the bounds of possibility that sinners such as we are can become Christlike. It is not surprising that we find it very hard to believe in the Gospel as it applies to ourselves. Therefore a great deal of our Lord's teaching, and that of the Apostles whom He inspired, was intended to enable us to overcome this difficulty. It is based on the truths that are now being rediscovered for our generation, notably by M. Coué and his school. Their terminology differs from that of the New Testament, and their teaching appears at first to ignore the necessity of religion. But further thought will, I believe, enable us to see that they

are but emphasizing psychological truths which appear new to us, but upon which the teaching of our Lord was based. They point out to us that whenever there is a conflict between what we wish to attain to and what we imagine as possible, our imagination always wins. They urge us therefore to increase the force of our imagination so that we may be able to make full use of the powers that are within us. Our Lord and His Apostles, using other language, did precisely the same thing.

Our Lord, for instance, repeatedly said that nothing would be impossible to us—nothing, He meant, of what we had reason to know God desired—if we had sufficient faith. His disciples could remove mountains, cast out devils, do greater wonders than He Himself had done, if only they could believe that it was possible for them. 'All things are possible to him that believeth.'[1] When people came to Him to be healed, He was wont to say that it depended on them whether they could be healed or not; and when cures had been effected, He spoke as if they, not He, had brought it about because they had believed it was possible. When people did not believe this, He could not do His mighty works.[2]

Now when our Lord says, Believe that it is possible, or that you *have received* what you have desired in prayer, and it shall be done, or you shall have it; and when M. Coué says, Imagine that it can be done, suggest to yourself that this power is actually yours, and it shall be done, you will find that you have the power: it seems clear that both are aiming at the same thing—are trying to enable men to make use of the forces they actually possess. And this whether those forces come to us from God 'by nature,' as we say, or by grace.

After our Lord's Ascension, when His Apostles went forth to their conflict, their minds were so filled with the knowledge of what He was to them, and their spirits with His

[1] S. Mark ix. 23; cf. xi. 24; xvi. 17; S. Matt. xvii. 19–21; S. Luke v. 18–20; S. John xiv. 12, etc.

[2] See S. Mark vi. 5, 6; S. Luke viii. 48; vii. 2–10, 50; xvii. 19; xviii 40–42.

Spirit, that they were well able to imagine that everything was possible which He inspired them to attempt. Hence they were not only able to 'turn the world upside down,' but they were filled with an eager longing that their disciples and Christians of subsequent generations should understand what Christ was to them, and be able to imagine that through and in Him all things were possible that God sent them to do, however great the odds against them would otherwise have seemed. This we know from the burning words of their epistles. If we dwell on some of them again in the light of the new teaching which is so attractive to our generation, it may be that their meaning will become clearer to us, and we shall be stimulated anew to be sure that we too can day by day do everything that God puts it into our hearts to aim at, however high and beyond our powers it has hitherto seemed to be. Let us think chiefly of the epistles of S. Paul and S. John. Take S. Paul first. We must take a few samples only of his teaching on this subject, for we could quote about a third of all his writings. Read Eph. i. and try to imagine the intense eagerness which caused him to pour out sentence after sentence, often with disregard of sequence or grammar, that his people might have the eyes of their heart enlightened to know 'what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe'—that very power, he says, by which God raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand far above the whole created universe. Go on reading from chap. ii. to chap. iv. 16 (especially iii. 14–21), and see how he tries to stir their imaginations to use the wonderful powers they actually possess as Christ's members, that they may in the different relationships of their lives, of which he speaks in the rest of the epistle, rise above all their terrible temptations and the evil atmosphere which surrounds them, to be holy, saintly Christians, manifesting that character which alone can win the world to Christ.

Or read Rom. viii., in which he tells us that the life of Christ which is actually within us can enable us to rise above

all that would otherwise keep us down; that because of Him we are children of God, free from the law of sin and death; that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ; that all the temptations or other evils that we meet with are only so much material for victory like our Lord's. We can scarcely read such words without having our imaginations stirred, to assure us that we can here and now accomplish all that God is asking of us. Cf. Gal. ii. 20; Col. ii. 9–15; iii. 1–3. The more we study S. Paul the more it appears that he rarely ventured to exhort people to greater efforts after holiness and love until he had already enabled them to imagine and to suggest to themselves that they could be holy and loving because of what Christ was to them.

The auto-suggestion which, as we gather from his life, he himself habitually made, can be summed up in his words 'I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.'

When we pass to S. John's teaching, we find that it is on the same lines. His first epistle, written long after S. Paul's death, probably when he was the only one left on earth who could teach with the authority of one who had seen and lived with the Lord, and at a time when the faith of many was growing dim, was evidently an attempt to enable the Church to attain to the confidence of the first disciples. All through it he says to them in effect, Imagine what Christ is to you; suggest to yourselves that though you are a small body sent to overcome and transform the whole world which 'lieth in the evil one,' you are more than equal to the task. To show this in detail it would be necessary to quote almost the whole of the epistle, for his exhortations throughout are combined with teaching which may make them sure that they can obey them. At the beginning he says, 'That which we have seen and heard (concerning the Word of life) declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'[1] All is contained in that, and if we and all Christians would exercise our imaginations sufficiently, we should all be sure that because of the fellowship with God in Christ, which is actually ours

[1] 1 S. John i. 1–4.

now, we could fulfil *all* God's will for us, and overcome every enemy. We are sinners, it is true, but 'the blood of Jesus . . . cleanseth us from all sin.' 'If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.' [1] 'A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shineth.' [2] 'I have written unto you . . . because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.' [3] 'This is the promise which he promised us, (even) the life eternal.' [4] 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and (such) we are': 'now are we children of God.' 'He was manifested (i.e. in Christ) to take away sins. . . . Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.' 'Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.' [5] Since this is all true, he can dare to say to them, 'Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren . . . let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth.' [6]

The spirit of anti-Christ, he says, is in the world already. But 'ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' [7] Or again, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son (to be) the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.' . . . 'We love' (i.e. are able to love) 'because he first loved us.' [8] 'Whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, (even) our faith.' 'These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, (even) unto you that believe on the name of the

[1] 1 S. John i. 7–9; ii. 1, 2.
[2] *Ib.* ii. 7, 8; cf. John xiii. 34.
[3] See *Ib.* ii. 12–14.
[4] *Ib.* ii. 25.
[5] *Ib.* iii. 1, 2, 5, 6, 9.
[6] See *Ib.* iii. 16–24.
[7] *Ib.* iv. 3, 4.
[8] See the whole pass. iv. 7–21.

Son of God. And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.' Finally, 'we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, (even) in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.' [1]

It is no wonder that the Church, stirred by such teaching as this, was able to face and overcome the might of the Roman Empire.

We need this teaching no less to-day. For though we can thank God that the whole world does not lie in the evil one as it did then, it is in many respects more difficult for us than it was for Christians of the first ages to imagine that Christ's gospel is true. It seems much too good to be true. The greatest difficulty we have in our fight for the kingdom of God is undoubtedly to believe that Christ is what He is to and in us, and that we can do all things that He inspires us to do by the power that is actually already within us.

We are too apt to suggest to ourselves that because we have been selfish for so many years we cannot be wholly loving now; that because we have not done it hitherto, we cannot now rise up and cast off our bad habits and enter into the 'perfect freedom' of the service of God and man. Yet the truth is that there is no height of goodness and self-sacrificing love that we cannot attain to through the power that worketh in us. We can be wholly Christian in all our dealings with all the people we meet, we can accomplish all that God is now showing us to be His will for us. This is the kind of auto-suggestion that is to be habitual for us all. There is no presumption in this; it is simple trust in Christ. For trust in Him does not mean that if we ask Him He will do for, i.e. instead of us, what we cannot do for ourselves; but it means being sure that because He is what He is, we possess the power already by gift from Him to do

[1] 1 S. John v. 4, 13–15, 19–20.

ourselves the whole of His will as He makes it known to us. And every suggestion that we make or is made to us to the contrary, we are to treat as a temptation to disbelief in Christ who loved us and gave Himself for us and now gives Himself to us with all the force of His almighty love.

It is hard to be a Christian, in order that all our powers of body, mind, and spirit may be evoked. It is possible to be a Christian because we are Christ's and Christ is God's. What the Christian life of each of us can be and can produce, we can only know in so far as we listen for the inspirations of God's spirit, and assure ourselves as we hear them that we can do all He asks us to do, and must therefore make the ventures He suggests, however impossible they have hitherto seemed for us.

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